

THE WORKS OF
SIR THOMAS MALORY

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PREFACE

SIR Thomas Malory's Arthurian romances are a remarkable example of literary revival. 'Loved deeply, darkly understood' by English readers of to-day, they are in all essentials the product and the consummation of a movement initiated by early French writers. They transform the legacy of one nation into a cherished possession of another and by the same token effect the transition from the medieval to the modern conception of the novel—from early romance to a type of fiction able to carry its message to the modern world.

How this was achieved is a problem which to a large extent remains unsolved, but perhaps the chief obstacle to its solution is the state in which Malory's writings have been allowed to remain ever since they left his desk 'in the ninth year of the reign of King Edward IV'. Of his numerous editors none but the first, William Caxton, had access to his work in manuscript form, and all the editions that have appeared since Caxton's time are based—directly or indirectly—on his *Morte Darthur* published at Westminster in 1485. What is more, modern editors, while differing only in the degree of closeness with which they follow Caxton's text, have so far made no attempt at a critical treatment of it. Intent on presenting it in an 'accessible' form, they have in most cases made it superficially intelligible by modernizing the spelling, removing obsolete words, and occasionally rewriting obscure passages. An exception to this practice is H. O. Sommer's reprint, which, in the editor's own words, 'follows the original impression of Caxton with absolute fidelity, word for word, line for line, and page for page'.¹ But 'fidelity' in a reprint, especially if it is 'absolute', can at best facilitate reference to an already existing printed version; it can throw no fresh light on the work itself.

In 1931 I was asked by the Delegates of the Clarendon Press to prepare a critical edition of Malory based on the two

¹ *Le Morte Darthur* by Syr Thomas Malory, the original edition of William Caxton now reprinted and edited with an Introduction and Glossary by H. Oskar Sommer, London, Nutt, 1889-91, vol. ii, p. 17.

extant copies of Caxton's volume. My work was nearing completion when, in the early summer of 1934, a startling discovery was made in the Fellows' Library in Winchester College by the then Librarian, Mr. W. F. Oakeshott. While the contents of the library were being examined for another purpose, a fifteenth-century manuscript of Malory's romances unexpectedly came to light. It had lost a gathering of eight leaves at each end, and probably for this reason had remained unidentified for the best part of a century since its first definite entry in the catalogue of the library in 1839. Further inquiry showed that, while the manuscript was not that used by Caxton, it was in many respects more complete and authentic than Caxton's edition and had the first claim to the attention of any future editor of Malory. My task was thus clearly outlined for me. Without undue regret I abandoned my original project and undertook to edit Malory's works from the newly discovered text.

The most obvious merit of this text is that it brings us nearer to what Malory really wrote. Less obvious but no less vital is the fact that it enables us to see Malory's work in the making—not as a single book such as Caxton produced under the spurious and totally unrepresentative title of *Le Morte Darthur*, but as a series of separate romances each representing a distinct stage in the author's development, from his first timid attempts at imaginative narrative to the consummate mastery of his last great books. And as we observe not merely what he achieved but how he achieved it, we become aware that his methods bear a close relation to the processes operating in the whole field of early fiction. No such approach has so far been possible: the 'static' view which, thanks to Caxton, prevailed in all critical works on Malory (my own monograph of sixteen years ago is no exception) precluded any study of his evolution. In the Introduction to this volume I have made an attempt to suggest how the omission may be remedied. But the problem is vast, and my essay is but an outline of what in abler hands may yet form a new and revealing chapter of literary history.

The method I have adopted in establishing the text is described in another section of the Introduction. Suffice it to say here that I have endeavoured to treat the Winchester

MS. with all the care due to a copy whose original is no longer extant: not to reconstruct that original in its entirety by means of hypothetical readings, but merely to lessen as far as possible the damage done to the work by its copyists. To discard emendations which cannot be justified on objective grounds may seem, in theory, an obvious procedure. In practice it is surprisingly uncommon, for while it is easy enough to lay down the rule *conserver le plus possible, réparer le moins possible*, it is less easy to apply it at the expense of editorial initiative and to retain awkward readings when more attractive conjectural ones come to mind. The temptation to accept these is such that I may occasionally have yielded to it against my better judgement. But throughout my work, and in face of every doubtful passage, I have borne in mind that the proper attitude to a text should be that of an archaeologist to a monument of the past: an attitude of respect for every detail that may conceivably belong to the original structure.

There is a vital corollary to this view. Where emendation ends, interpretation must begin, and while punctuation, paragraphing, and the like are often its most effective means, no 'conservative' edition can safely dispense with a commentary. Hence the bulky sequel to the text in Volume III. It deals in the first place with textual problems; but it is also concerned with Malory's method of work as seen against the background of his sources: with his reactions to the texts he used, his rejections and selections, and the extent and character of his contribution. Like any *Quellenforschung* this type of annotation runs the risk of defeating its purpose, for it can make our reading of the text so thoroughly 'source-ridden' that we no longer see it as it is in itself, but only as it contrasts with its models. Against this error there is no safeguard beyond a sympathetic insight into the infinite complexities of assimilation and growth which make a product of the mind resemble a living organism. But given such an insight, a knowledge of the author's mind and method has an attraction all its own. There may be other ways of reading enjoyably, but none of reading constructively, of following the process and seeing its completion as a human achievement.

On my inability to do justice to my task I need not dwell at any length, but one of my handicaps should perhaps be made clear at the outset. My long acquaintance with Malory's Arthurian romances does not alter the fact that, as one of my most generous critics has pointed out, I came to him with a memory 'too full and too recent' of his French antecedents. *Nous ne voyons jamais qu'un seul côté des choses*, and my natural tendency has been to place Malory, not against his native English background, but against that of medieval French fiction. I have resigned myself to this inevitable one-sidedness with the less regret because I know that I leave whatever lies beyond my grasp in better hands than mine, and because the anomaly of an English classic being edited by a French scholar is in this case almost a necessary evil. For not only are most of Malory's works 'briefly drawn out of French', not only is their inspiration and texture essentially French, but the establishing of the text cannot be attempted without the aid of such records of Malory's sources as are found among the French Arthurian romances. Yet the anomaly remains, and the inevitable risk of misinterpretation. Nothing has been more welcome to me, therefore, than the help and advice I received in the early stages of this work from a scholar-friend, the late Professor E. V. Gordon, whose supreme competence was equalled only by his generosity to fellow workers and his selfless devotion to learning. His untimely death put an end to a collaboration which I valued above all else and to which this edition owes more than words can acknowledge. Fortunately his successor, Professor G. L. Brook, was good enough to step into the breach and lend me a helping hand at a time when I needed it most. He is the sole author of the Glossary—the only section of these volumes which I can unreservedly describe as being worthy of the text. For this and for his invaluable assistance in the clearing of numerous textual difficulties I cannot thank him enough.

It was my good fortune to find among my former pupils, who had already left their own mark in the province of French studies, as many willing helpers as I could reasonably ask for. I should like to record my especial gratitude to Dr. F. Whitehead for his important contribution to my

commentary on the *Tale of King Arthur*; to Mr. E. S. Murrell for having collated with infinite care the two extant copies of Caxton's edition; to Dr. J. A. Noonan for valuable bibliographical information; to Mr. J. P. Collas for transcribing with extreme accuracy several sections of the Winchester manuscript; and to Dr. Gweneth Hutchings, who not only assisted me in the transcription of the text with the skill of an expert palaeographer, but supplied original material for the study of Malory's romances of Lancelot.

Several friends, including Sir Edmund Chambers, Professor M. K. Pope, and Professor T. B. W. Reid, were kind enough to read my Introduction in manuscript and give me the benefit of their advice on points of fact and interpretation. Of the libraries which provided me with the essential material I have incurred a particular obligation to the Winchester College Fellows' Library for generously allowing me to use and publish their newly discovered manuscript of Malory's text; to the Pierpont Morgan Library for permission to reproduce part of the unique complete copy of Caxton's edition; and to the John Rylands Library which in the person of its eminent Librarian, Dr. Henry Guppy, has done everything possible to facilitate my work at every stage.

The great institution under whose imprint this edition is privileged to appear is responsible for more than its outward form. To have seen a text of this magnitude through the press at a time of the greatest national emergency is in itself a unique achievement; but my debt to this self-effacing agency extends to every page of this book, to every detail of its presentation, and indeed to all the innumerable improvements which will, I hope, make it, in Caxton's phrase, 'for to pass the time pleasant to read in'.

As much of this work as belongs to me I dedicate to the memory of Joseph Bédier whose encouragement and example have been my lifelong inspiration. I wish for no higher reward than the knowledge that he would have recognized it as the work of a disciple.

E. V.

December, 1945.

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

THE KNIGHT-PRISONER

EVER since 1485, when Malory's romances first appeared in print, the only clue to their authorship has been the following paragraph at the end of the book:

I praye you all Ientyl men and Ientyl wymmen that redeth this book of Arthur and his knyghtes from the begynnyng to the endyng praye for me whyle I am on lyue that god sende me good delyueraunce & whan I am deed I praye you all praye for my soule for this book was ended the ix yere of the reygne of kyng edward the fourth by syr Thomas Maleore knyght as Ihesu helpe hym for hys grete myght as he is the seruauant of Ihesu bothe day and nyght.

Apart from the author's name, three points can be gathered from this passage: he was a knight; he completed his work in the ninth year of the reign of Edward IV, i.e. between 4 March 1469 and 3 March 1470; and he was then in prison: the 'deliverance' for which he asks his readers to pray can only mean deliverance from prison.¹ A Sir Thomas Malory,² knight, of Newbold Revell (Warwickshire) and Winwick (Northamptonshire), is known to have lived at that time;³ he was born in the first quarter of the century and died on 14 March 1471. But whether he was in prison in the ninth year of the reign of Edward IV remains uncertain.⁴ It is known that he was excluded from two successive general pardons granted by Edward IV to the Lancastrians in 1468,⁵ but exclusion from a general pardon is

¹ Cf. my *Malory*, p. 115.

² The variants of spelling are: *Malore*, *Mallore*, *Mallere*, *Malery*, *Malorie*, *Malarie*, *Malorey*, *Malory*.

³ Cf. G. L. Kittredge, *Who was Sir Thomas Malory?* Boston, 1897. The discovery was first announced in *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia* in March 1894.

⁴ Surprising though it may seem, the fact of Malory's imprisonment in 1469 has so far been taken for granted. Cf. my *Malory*, p. 116.

⁵ On 24 August and 1 December (cf. *Liber Albus* ii, ff. 199-200, and iii, ff. 227-8). The pardon granted in December 1468 was first published by the Historical

in itself no evidence of imprisonment,¹ and even if the point could be conceded, a gap of at least three months would remain between the date of the second general pardon (1 December 1468) and the earliest possible date of the passage quoted above (4 March 1469). It is also known that in the course of an eventful life Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revell was imprisoned several times and that the length of his detention varied from a few days to three years;² but his last recorded imprisonment ended not later than November 1462, and there is no conclusive proof that he was arrested at any time after that date.

The newly discovered manuscript of Malory's romances helps to some extent to dispose of this difficulty. Two passages, neither of which appears in any printed version of the work, contain references to the author's imprisonment. One of them is an appeal for a speedy 'good deliverance':

And I pray you all that redyth this tale to pray for hym that this wrote that God sende hym good delyveraunce sone and hastely. Amen.³

These lines, obviously written in prison,⁴ occur at the end of the *Tale of Sir Gareth*, long before the end of the last book. On the most conservative estimate the writing of the intervening matter, which in the present edition covers some nine hundred pages, could not have taken less than a year. Hence at least a year before he concluded his work, i.e. in February 1469 at the latest, the author must have been a prisoner. Still more helpful is the statement found on f. 70 of the manuscript, at the end of the *Tale of King Arthur*:⁵

And this booke endyth whereas sir Launcelot and sir Trystrams com to courte. Who that woll make ony more lette hym seke other bookis of kynge Arthure or of sir Launcelot or sir Trystrams; for this

MSS. Commission and quoted by Sir Edmund Chambers in his essay on *Malory* (English Association, Pamphlet No. 51), 1922, p. 16.

¹ Sir Humphrey Nevill, similarly excluded, was not in prison at the time when the pardon was granted.

² Cf. E. Hicks, *Sir Thomas Malory, his Turbulent Career*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1928, and A. C. Baugh, 'Documenting Sir Thomas Malory', *Speculum*, vol. viii, pp. 3-29. ³ f. 148.

⁴ *The Book of Sir Tristram* (v. *infra*, p. 540) contains some remarks on the hardships of imprisonment, but it is not clear that they refer to the author's own experiences. ⁵ See facsimile facing this page.

stronge þæt þæt myght but fewe bynght stonde hym a buffette
a spere. And at þæt next feste sir Pelleas and sir Char-
val were made bynght of þæt rounde table. for þæt were .ij. Degis
wode for .ij. bynght were slayne þæt .xxij. mony. And grette
Joy had bynge artgime of sir Pelleas and of sir Char-
val. But Pelleas loved new after sir Gawayne. But as
he spared hym for þæt love of þæt bynge but of þæt tyme at
Justis at turnement. Sir Pelleas quyte sir Gawayne
for so hit requyrt. In tise booke of freust. So sir Trys-
tramo many dayes after fonght wif sir Char-
valte. In an
Islande and þæt tyme and a grette batayle. But þæt laste sir
Trystramo flew hym. So Sir Trystramo was so won-
ded þæt myghte he myght recon and lay at a foun-
teyn a yere. And sir Pelleas was a workyngful
bynght and was one of þæt .iiij. þæt encloved þæt Sam-
grete. And þæt damel of þæt laabe made by her meane tthat new
he had a do wif sir Lancelot de laabe for wofere sir Lancel-
lot was at ony Justis or at ony turnement. He wolde
not suffir hym to be þæt tthat day but yf hit were on þæt fyde
of Sir Lancelot here endyt tthat tale as þæt freust
booke seyt. for tthat maynaga of bynge vte. But byng
artgime tthat regned after hym it ded many batayles.
And tthat booke endyt wofere as sir Lancelot. And
Sir Trystramo com to comte. wofere tthat wofere make
ony more latte hym seke of booke of bynge artgime
or of Sir Lancelot. or Sir Trystramo for tthat was
drawyn by a bynght prisoner. Sir Thomas of al-
lecomre tthat god sende hym good recon Amen it of

was drawyn by a knyght presoner sir Thomas Malleorré, that God sende hym good recover. Amen, etc. EXPLICIT.

Here at last we have, instead of a mere allusion to the author's experiences, a plain admission that the *Tale of King Arthur*—the second in date of his romances¹—was written by a *knight-prisoner*. Scarcely less definite is the indication that when he finished writing it he had no intention of 'seeking any more books of Arthur, Lancelot, or Tristram'. Since at that time six of his romances were still unwritten, it stands to reason that between the passage just quoted and the resumption of the work there must have elapsed an interval of time long enough to enable him not only to change his mind but to lay his hand on a considerable amount of fresh material. He was, as he himself tells us, a prisoner *before* that interval; his captivity, whether continuous or intermittent, must, then, have preceded the writing of any of the remaining six romances by several months, if not years, and it seems reasonable to suppose that it began long before he wrote the concluding sentence of the *Tale of Sir Gareth* and at least a few years before he completed his last work.

The bearing of this on the author's identification is clear. Until now the only relevant passage in his work has been his appeal for deliverance written at least three months after the last exclusion from amnesty of Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revell and six or seven years after his last recorded imprisonment. The passages quoted above can be dated well within those years, if not earlier. No doubt the identification still remains a little less than certain, for it depends upon the likely, but not altogether impregnable, assumption that between 1460 and 1470 there could have been no other 'knight-prisoner' of the name of Thomas Malory. But such certainty as there is does not fall short of what can reasonably be expected from the records of a fifteenth-century character who was neither a professional writer nor a prominent public figure; and it is at all events

¹ Cf. *infra*, pp. xxxv–ix. *The Tale of Sir Launcelot*, *The Tale of Sir Gareth*, *The Book of Sir Tristram*, *The Tale of the Sankgreal*, *The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere* and *The Morte Arthur* were all produced after *The Tale of King Arthur*.

sufficient to call for some account of the few known facts of his life.¹

Sir Thomas Malory belonged to an old Warwickshire family. He was probably still in his early twenties when in 1433 or 1434 he succeeded to the ancestral estate. In 1436 he served in the train of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, at Calais, with one lance and two archers.² A few years later he married,³ and sometime between 1441 and 1449 acquired the estate of his sister's husband, Robert Vincent.⁴ So far, then, there was nothing unusual in his life, and the fact that as early as 1443 a Thomas Smythe charged him with the theft of goods and chattels is no proof that he committed any such offence.⁵ Nor is it necessary to assume with his latest biographer that 'in view of the orgy of lawlessness on which he is in full career when we next meet him', he must have been engaged in criminal activities for several years before the 'orgy' began.⁶ All we know is that in the year 1450, when he was over forty, from being a peaceable and presumably well-to-do citizen he became a law-breaker. In the course of eighteen months—from January 1450 to July 1451—he was charged with several major crimes, including a robbery, a theft, two cattle-raids, some extortions, a rape, and even an attempted murder. It would appear from the charges brought against him that on 4 January 1450 he lay in ambush with other malefactors for the purpose of murdering Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham; that on 23 May he 'feloniously raped' Joan Smyth and stole some property belonging to her husband, Hugh Smyth of Monks Kirby; that a week later he extorted money from Margaret Kyng and William

¹ Unless otherwise stated my narrative is based on the records published by G. L. Kittredge, E. Hicks, and A. C. Baugh, and on some of the materials contained in Appendix I of my *Malory*. I am also much indebted to Sir Edmund Chambers for numerous useful suggestions on the whole problem.

² According to Dugdale (*Antiquities of Warwickshire*, London, 1656, p. 56), this occurred *at the siege of Calais*, in Henry V's time. There was no siege of Calais under Henry V, but in 1436 Calais was threatened with siege, if not actually besieged, and Dugdale's *K.H.5 time* is probably a misprint for *K.H.6 time*. I owe this correction to Sir Edmund Chambers.

³ His wife Elizabeth bore him one son, Robert, who died in Sir Thomas's lifetime.

⁴ Cf. my *Malory*, p. 121.

⁵ It is not known what came of this charge, but it seems probable that it fell through.

⁶ A. C. Baugh, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

Hales, and on 31 August dealt in like fashion with John Mylner. In the following year he is alleged to have continued his operations on a more extensive scale: to have extorted, on 4 June 1451, with the help of five other men, 7 cows, 2 calves, a cart, and 335 sheep from William Rowe and William Dowde of Shawell,¹ broken into a park at Caludon on 20 July, carried off 6 does, and inflicted considerable damage on the property.² On 23 July, before he could be charged with this last offence, he was arrested for some of his earlier felonies and kept in custody at Coleshill. Two days later he escaped by swimming across the moat, and on 28 July, so our records tell us, broke into the Abbey of the Blessed Mary of Coombe, opened two of the abbot's chests, and stole various *jocalia* and *ornamenta* as well as two bags of money. The next day, according to the same records, he repeated the assault with the help of numerous accomplices, broke eighteen doors in the abbey, insulted the abbot, and stole more money.³ With this the most eventful period of his life was, as far as we know, at an end. Soon after his alleged second attack on Coombe Abbey he was arrested again, and his detention lasted until May 1454, with a brief interval of freedom in 1452.⁴

On 5 May 1454 Malory was released on bail to Roger Chamburleyn and nine others for six months. He promptly took advantage of this to carry off some oxen from a manor

¹ All the charges so far mentioned were brought against Malory at an Inquisition held at Nuneaton on 23 August 1451. The relevant documents have been published by E. Hicks (op. cit., pp. 93-102), but in dating the events to which they refer I have taken into account the corrections proposed by A. C. Baugh in an article in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, xxix, pp. 452-7.

² Cf. Baugh, 'Documenting Sir Thomas Malory', *Speculum*, viii, pp. 20-2. The document referring to this offence is *Coram Rege Roll* 763, Hilary, 30 Hen. VI, m. 23 *dorso*. The plaintiffs are the Archbishop of Canterbury, Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham, and the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk. The damage done to the property is said to amount to £500—clearly an impossible figure in the circumstances.

³ This is one of the items in the Nuneaton Inquisition. It gives the names of fourteen men who accompanied Malory on his second attack on the abbey and states that about a hundred others took part in it. Cf. Hicks, loc. cit.

⁴ He was certainly at liberty on 26 March 1452 when, according to an entry in the Patent Rolls, the Duke of Buckingham, Sir Edward Grey of Groby, and the Sheriffs of Warwick and Leicester were directed to arrest him 'to answer certain charges'. The date of this commission is wrongly given in my *Malory* (p. 6, note 3) as 1453.

belonging to Katherine Peyto in Northants,¹ and at the same time used his experience of cattle-raids to assist his friend and accomplice, John Aleyn, who on 21 May broke into the grounds and buildings of John Abot of Tilty at Great Easton in Essex to steal two horses; on 27 June Aleyn stole another horse from Richard Skott, vicar of Gosfield in the same county, and five days later carried off two more: one belonging to Thomas Bykenen and the other to Thomas Strete.² Malory is reported to have 'feloniously' given shelter to Aleyn a few days later at Thaxted and again at Braintree, and to have plotted with him an attack on the property of William Grene of Gosfield. The attack failed, but on 16 October Malory was committed to the custody of Thomas Cobham, keeper of the jail at Colchester, and so was unable to appear at the expiration of his bail (29 October). A writ was issued to the custodian of the jail to bring him to court, and although on the next day (30 October) Malory broke out of jail,³ the custodian succeeded in producing him on 18 November. Malory was then committed to the Marshal. For the year 1455 no records are available, but when in February 1456 Malory was produced in King's Bench by the Lieutenant of the Tower, he offered a royal patent of pardon granted on 24 November 1455, presumably by the Duke of York.⁴ On 3 July 1456 he was able to borrow money from Thomas Greswold, and in the same year served for his shire in the Parliament then held at Westminster.⁵ He was subsequently rearrested and detained in Ludgate (normally a prison for debtors), perhaps because of his failure to repay the debt, which could be regarded as a breach of the conditions of the pardon. On 19 October 1457

¹ The petition of Katherine Peyto was found by A. C. Baugh (op. cit., pp. 19-20) among the *Early Chancery Proceedings* (C/15/780). Its dating presents some difficulty, but of the alternatives suggested by Baugh the more likely seems the period 1452-6, not 1442-50.

² A full account of these offences is given in a record of the *Ancient Indictments*, K.B. 9/280 m. 43. Cf. Baugh, op. cit., pp. 22-5.

³ The record describing Malory's escape from Colchester prison (K.B. 9/280 m. 44) specifies that 'predictus Thomas Mallory . . . eandem gaolam sive prisonam domini Regis . . . vi et armis, videlicet gladiis, langodebeves et daggariis felonice fregerit et sic extra eandem gaolam felonice adtunc et ibidem evaserit et ad largum exierit'.

⁴ The king's incapacity lasted from 12 November 1455 to 25 February 1456, and during this period York acted as Protector. The pardon seems to have been disregarded in later proceedings.

⁵ Cf. Dugdale, loc. cit.

he was released on bail for two months,¹ and at the end of this time returned to the Marshal.

A year and three months later, at Easter 1459, he was reported at large in Warwickshire, and so far as can be ascertained remained free until the Hilary term of 1460, when he was committed to Newgate. We know neither the reason for this last arrest nor the exact length of the imprisonment, but at the end of 1462 Malory must have been free again, for his name occurs in a list of persons who went with Edward IV to Northumberland in November of that year.² There is reason to believe that, as a Warwickshire man, he followed the shifting policies of the Earl of Warwick whom he accompanied on this expedition. He was certainly with Warwick at the siege of Alnwick which ended on 30 January 1463.³ When, later on, the long pending breach between Warwick and Edward IV occurred and Warwick joined the Lancastrians Malory most probably did so too. Our next records are the two general pardons granted by Edward IV to the Lancastrians in 1468. The first is dated 24 August and states that the pardon shall not extend to 'Thomas Malorie, miles'; the second, similarly worded, is dated 1 December. We cannot be certain that Malory was in prison at the time when the pardons were issued; but if he was, he probably had to wait for his release until Henry VI's restoration on 9 October 1470. He died soon after, on 14 March 1471, and 'lyeth buried under a marble in the chapel of St. Francis at the Grey Friars near Newegate in the suburbs of London'.⁴ The inscription on his tomb said simply: *Dominus Thomas Mallere valens miles obiit 14 Mar. 1470 de parochia Monkenkyrkby in comitatu Warwici.*⁵

Biographical interpretation has done so much harm to literary criticism that it is a relief to find how very little room there is for it in Malory's case. No one will seriously

¹ To William Neville, Lord of Fauconberg. The bail expired on 28 December 1457.

² *Brief Notes of Occurrences under Henry VI and Edward IV from MS. Lambeth 448*, in *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, etc., ed. by James Gairdner, Camden Society, 1880, p. 157.

³ He may also have been at the siege of Bamborough until its surrender on Christmas Eve 1462. The references to Bamborough and Alnwick in his last book (*infra*, p. 1257) are not without significance.

⁴ Dugdale, loc. cit.

⁵ *Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica*, vol. iii, p. 287.

attempt to read his life into his works or associate these with any phase or aspect of his curious career. The danger lies the other way. To those who think that criticism has some relevance for biography it may seem hardly credible that a man whose behaviour showed so little respect for conventional morality should have written a book which, according to Caxton's Preface, was designed 'for our doctrine and for to beware that we fall not to vice or sin, but exercise and follow virtue'. The book, the Preface tells us, describes 'the renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalry'; and it may conceivably be felt that while a mere portrayal of such 'acts' need have no relation to the author's own record, the moral teaching, the 'doctrine' which they purport to illustrate makes singularly bad sense in the context of his life. This view, if carried to the point of denying the attribution of the book to the historical Thomas Malory, would be a complete perversion of method, for no interpretation of a work of fiction can be relied upon to that extent. But lest there be any temptation to question his authorship on such grounds, it might be worth while inquiring whether they exist; in other words, whether the notion that he wrote the 'noble histories of King Arthur and his knights' is in fact as incongruous as it seems. If on analysis the incongruity proves to be more apparent than real, the case for the identification will not, strictly speaking, be strengthened; but it will become more understandable and perhaps less likely to raise unreal problems.

The moral qualities of the 'noble histories' have been variously assessed by the critics. Ascham thought that 'the whole pleasure' of the book 'stood in two specyall poynts, in open manslaughter and bold bawdrye'; Tennyson found that Malory's work was 'touched by the adulterous finger of a time that hover'd between war and wantonness'; Sir Edward Strachey, while admitting that it exhibited 'a picture of a society far lower than our own in morals', was convinced that Malory had made a real effort to distinguish between vice and virtue and 'morally reprobate the former'.¹ This last view, with certain qualifications, has prevailed, and Malory has become associated in our minds with a doctrine

¹ *Le Mortie Darthur*, ed. by Sir Edward Strachey, 1919, p. xxiii.

of 'humanity and gentleness'. Few critics have realized that the belief in his 'morality' is based not so much on his work as on Caxton's preface to it.¹ The confusion is the less excusable because Caxton clearly distinguishes between the purpose of the work and his own object in bringing it out. While insisting that his readers should learn the 'noble acts of chyvalrye' and the 'jentyll and vertuous dedes that somme knyghtes used in tho dayes', he is truthful enough to admit that these are by no means the only 'dedes' recorded in the book: 'for herein may be seen noble chyvalrye, curtosye, humanité, frendlynnesse, hardynesse, love, frendshyp, cowrdyse, murdre, hate.' From this miscellaneous array of virtues and vices Caxton begs his readers to choose all that is good and reject the rest: 'doo after the good and leve the evyl, and it shal brynge you to good fame and renommee.' But he does not say that this choice is necessarily implied in the text or that Malory himself intended his 'noble histories' to serve as a means of moral improvement.

Nor would Malory's work, in so far as it is original, bear out this view. No doubt, as long as his sources vary in their moral outlook, and as long as he follows them indiscriminately, he cannot help reproducing certain passages which suggest an idealistic inspiration. The *Quest of the Holy Grail*—'the holiest that is in this world'—is a case in point. All that is 'holy' in Malory's version of it is translated from the French, and his own attitude to it shows itself mainly in the attempt to deprive the story of its religious significance. His *Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones*—by far the longest of his romances—is based on a different type of work. Its immediate source is a French prose romance which combines the original Tristan legend with a mass of thirteenth-century Arthurian material; in terms of French literary history it can be described as a mixture of pre-courtly motifs with a *roman courtois* and a *roman d'aventures*. Each of these elements has its background in contemporary thought and a certain 'morality' of its own; but they all seem to be equally foreign to Malory. When he stops to moralize or to enlarge on the curious adventures of his characters he almost

¹ The most recent example of this misconception is the chapter on *The Genius of Chivalry* in my monograph on Malory. See especially p. 59.

invariably points a moral or adds a detail which has no relation to the real meaning of the story. His Tristan complains of having abandoned for the sake of his beloved 'many lands and riches'; his Guinevere gives her knights 'treasure enough for their expenses'; and on several occasions he makes King Arthur's knights acquire substantial sources of revenue 'through might of arms'. These and many other similar additions seem to reveal a highly realistic view of life, a firm belief in the importance of wealth, and an almost pathetic concern with material comforts. As Malory gains more independence in the treatment of his sources, this attitude becomes more obvious. His *Launcelot and Guinevere* includes a whole chapter of his own composition which Caxton has inaccurately entitled 'How true love is likened unto summer'. In reality Malory does not 'liken love unto summer', but elaborates in his own way the theme of the reawakening of nature. If, he remarks, 'every lusty heart beginneth to blossom and bring out fruit' in May, it is because 'all herbs and trees renewen a man and woman, and likewise lovers'. 'For winter', he explains further, 'with his rough winds and blasts causeth man and woman to cower and sit fast by the fire.' This is Malory's counterpart to the idealistic doctrine of courtly romance, and his most successful escape from the oppressive atmosphere of *courtoisie* into a world of comfortable realities.

The least 'moral' of his sources were doubtless those which he chose for his first attempt at 'reducing' French romances into English: the continuation of *Merlin* and some fragments of the last part of the prose *Lancelot*. Both these works belonged to the most advanced stage in the development of the French Arthurian tradition and preserved few traces of its original courtly inspiration. Their distinctive feature was the ingenious elaboration of fanciful adventures. King Arthur's habit of declining to eat at supper until he had heard of a new adventure and, regardless of its purpose, entrusted it to one of his knights may be taken as a humorous but accurate expression of the tendency which prevailed in works of this type. The fact that originally—in the early days of *courtoisie*—adventure had been a means to an end, a vehicle of refined sentiment, was forgotten, and the curiously

interwoven quests, pursuits, and battles became the real if not the only centre of interest. Knight-errantry, as treated by the prose writers of the thirteenth century, ceased to be a school of courtly service; it became primarily a peculiar mode of living, characterized by a constant search for new adventures of all kinds. The romances which Malory chose for his early adaptations¹ are good examples of this variety of fiction. Their main object is to relate on an ever-increasing scale the miscellaneous experiences of a group of fearless knights spurred to action by their indefatigable king. But what to a modern critic seems a mere succession of *creuses et monotones invraisemblances*² was to thirteenth-century readers a source of genuine delight, and to contemporary authors the foundation of their narrative art. Moreover, the type of mind that reacts favourably to such compositions has certainly existed at all times, although the changes of literary taste and fashion may have caused it to migrate from one category of readers to another and to descend sometimes from the highest to the lowest strata. It would not be surprising, therefore, if in fifteenth-century England a man whose moral and psychological outlook was very different from our own, and different also from that of the early courtly writers, had been attracted by the Arthurian novels of the 'adventurous' type. If any background of actual experience was needed to awaken interest in such works, it was not one of moral and sentimental refinement, and there is no real reason why a man totally unaffected by the accepted code of behaviour should not have been sensitive to their appeal. Nor does Malory's contribution to the narrative present any difficulty. What he seems to value above all at this stage of his work is the record of unusual and daring exploits, and his originality as a writer shows itself chiefly in the directness of exposition, in the substitution of simple manners for courtly etiquette, and in the elimination of the supernatural and the mysterious. He prefers straightforward speech to elaborate orations, human cunning to the inexplicable workings of supernatural forces, and a realistic setting to the conventional fairy-tale scenery of French romance.

¹ *The Tale of King Arthur* and *The Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake*.

² *Merlin*, ed. G. Paris et J. Ulrich, p. lxix.

It may be argued that the fairest specimens of Malory's 'morality' are the remarks he occasionally inserts to describe the practice and the ideals of chivalry. Some of these remarks refer to principles of chivalric behaviour seemingly distinct from the mere art of fighting. A knight, he says, should be courteous and gentle, for then 'he has favour in every place'. Nor should he indulge in useless fighting: his bravery and skill are to be subordinate to his purpose, and those who abuse their physical superiority forfeit their claim to perfect knighthood. On the strength of such utterances Malory has been described by some as a belated but sincere exponent of the moral ideals of chivalry,¹ while others have suggested that he embodied these ideals 'in actual personages and so influenced the national character of his countrymen in the best way'.²

The text of Malory's writings preserved in the Winchester MS. throws new light on what chivalry really meant to him. The beginnings of his 'doctrine' are found in his earliest work, *The Tale of the Noble King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius*, of which the Winchester MS. alone gives a complete version. Caxton's rendering of it is a drastic abridgement. Puzzled by the archaic character of the *Tale*, Caxton, 'simple person', reduced it to less than half its size, with the result that until now it has not been possible to form an accurate idea either of the content of the story or of its position among Malory's romances. The narrative is based upon an English alliterative poem known as the *Morte Arthure*. While shortening his original and modernizing some of its vocabulary, Malory treats it with far more respect than his other sources. Its chief attraction for him lies in the record of Arthur's heroic exploits, which he expands and elaborates as best he can, so as to make Arthur appear as the true embodiment of heroic chivalry. Arthur is the 'Conqueror', the English counterpart of Charlemagne, and he claims by right the possession of the Roman Empire. He is the champion of the weak and the oppressed, witness his fight with the giant who had caused so much distress to the people of Brittany. But he has some of the characteristics of the primitive type of warrior. He does not shrink

¹ Cf. my *Malory*, pp. 55-69.

² Strachey, *op. cit.*, p. xxi.

from a wholesale massacre of the Romans, and his cruelty in battle is equalled only by his enormous strength. Malory is careful to emphasize, however, that in spite of this cruelty to the enemy Arthur has human qualities which endear him to his own people. The implacable conqueror of the Romans mourns the death of his own knights as an irreparable loss and forgets for a moment his grim and glorious task. The Roman Emperor's challenge grieves him because he cannot tolerate unnecessary bloodshed. He is wise and prudent, anxious to take counsel with his knights, and generous in rewarding them for their services. The noble king is thus shown in all his primitive, yet human glory: not as a mere abstract centre of the fellowship of the Round Table, but as a political and military leader, conscious of his responsibility for the welfare and the prestige of his kingdom.¹

This idealized portrait of Arthur may well be interpreted as a tribute to Henry V. As if to strengthen the analogy Malory adds several details which make Arthur's expedition against the Romans resemble Henry V's triumphant campaign in France. Just as Henry appointed two men to rule the country in his absence—Henry Beaufort and the Duke of Bedford—so in Malory's version of Arthur's campaign Arthur appoints two chieftains for the same purpose: Baudwen of Bretayne and Cadore of Cornwall. The king's itinerary through France is altered so as to resemble the route followed by Henry.² Just as the latter became virtually King of France after Agincourt (by the Treaty of Troyes Charles VI had agreed to let Henry succeed him on his death), so Malory's Arthur, after his victory over the Romans, is 'crowned Emperor by the Pope's hands, with all royalty in the world to weld forever'. Nor is it without significance that Malory brings his *Noble Tale* to an end at this point and dismisses for the time being the rest of the story which he found in the English poem: Mordred's treachery and Arthur's downfall. His intention is clear: he is anxious that the story of Arthur's triumph should remain uppermost in the reader's mind as a record of the greatest

¹ Cf. my article on 'Malory's Morte Darthur in the Light of a Recent Discovery' in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. xix, No. 2, July 1935.

² For details of these changes see the relevant section of the *Commentary*.

English victory of his age and that the reader should know *how* this victory was won. Caxton hits the mark when he says that in Malory's book his readers will see how those who 'used gentle and virtuous deeds' came to 'honour', but he mistakes—perhaps deliberately—Malory's practical intention for a moral one. *The Tale of Arthur and Lucius* is the first in date of Malory's extant works;¹ it was written at a time when the author's recollections of the great king were made particularly vivid by a dynastic dispute directed against Henry V's legitimate heir. Whether as a Lancastrian or as a follower of Warwick who had sworn allegiance to Henry VI while fighting his advisers and even resisted the Duke of York's attempt to assume the crown,² Malory had every reason to remember that Henry V had made the name of England glorious. His often quoted remark—'this is a great default of us Englishmen, for there may nothing please us no term'—may well be taken to refer to those who had forgotten not only the sanctity of the royal title³ but the illustrious deeds of the great English monarch they had once acclaimed as a victor. Malory's first 'noble history' is a clear reminder of those deeds. Conceived in the midst of the greatest political upheaval of the century, it was an attempt to show what had been and what could still be achieved 'through clean knighthood'.

Chivalry was, then, to Malory, at that initial stage of his work, the *faculté maîtresse* of a brave warrior-king and of his faithful knights; it was man's heroic devotion to a great cause. As Malory's work advanced, and as he ventured deeper and deeper into the vast labyrinth of Arthurian fiction, he found himself following the tracks of innumerable 'warriors wrought in steely weeds', some of whom had distinguished themselves in Arthur's victorious campaign. But as their numbers grew their chivalric ambition, as Malory under-

¹ Cf. *infra*, pp. xxxvi–viii.

² On 16 October 1460.

³ In the thirteenth-century French version of the Tristan romance which Malory followed very closely there is a story of a rebellion against King Mark. In trying to persuade the rebels to lay down their arms Mark says that the land they have invaded belongs to the Pope and that their action might jeopardize 'la sainte terre de Jerusalem'. In Malory's otherwise faithful rendering of this incident Mark offers, as a price of peace, to go to war against the infidels, for, he says, 'I trow that is fayrer warre than thus to areyse people agaynste youre kynge' (p. 680).

stood it, steadily decreased. They were no longer concerned with the practical business of warfare; they still wore their glittering armour and were eager to use their spears and swords; but their battles seemed to be fought in the void, and there was no discernible object in their exploits. Malory soon realized that the 'great books' of the French Arthurian Cycle failed to provide a worthy continuation of his first Arthurian work, and proceeded to supplement them with remarks on the art and meaning of chivalry. Faithful to his original conception of knighthood, he treated it not as a vague background of adventures but as the practical function of a well-established order—the 'High Order of Knighthood'—with its headquarters firmly fixed in the household of a great prince. Arthur naturally had to play the part of that prince. While in the French Arthurian romances Arthur's court had been but the conventional starting-point of knightly quests and Arthur himself a fantastic character, a king of Fairyland, Malory made him into the most accomplished and dignified champion of chivalry and the real founder of its great traditions. Under Arthur's leadership chivalry becomes a useful discipline which, if properly practised, can make its adherents into 'the sternest knights to their foes'. The technique of fighting, and more particularly of single combat, is Malory's favourite topic; he speaks of it with confidence and authority. If, in addition to this, chivalry is also a matter of good breeding, gentleness, and loyalty, it is because these qualities, as shown by the example of Arthur, equip the perfect knight for his task and produce a type of warrior ready for any sacrifice and conscious of the importance of his calling. This was what Malory must have learnt both from real life and from reflection, and what he endeavoured to convey in his early work, not as a doctrine, but as a rule of conduct, more vital than ever in times of stress and struggle. The issue as he saw it was essentially a practical, not a moral one, and so far as we can judge it was in the same earnest spirit of practical heroism that in his later writings he so often attempted to commemorate in terms of imaginary knight-errantry some of the great declining traditions of his own age.

How so small a life was graced with true poetic vision, what miraculous play of character and circumstance brought the obscure knight-prisoner to his high theme, we may never know. But when all is said, it is enough to realize that in its varied human aspects his work does not belie what little can be inferred from the records of his strange destiny. The biographer may be tempted to go further and look for positive links between the author and his writings; the critic will more readily abide by Caxton's dictum: 'For to passe the tyme thys book shal be pleasaunte to rede in, but for to gyve fayth and byleve that al is trewe that is conteyned herin, ye be at your lyberté.'

CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF THE BOOK

1. Caxton's '*Morte Darthur*'

AS long as Caxton's edition—'enprynted and fynnysshed in thabbey of Westmestre the last day of Juyl the yere of our Lord mccccclxxxv'—was the only available record of Malory's writings there could be little or no reliable evidence as to what Caxton did to Malory's text. That he was no mere printer, but the publisher and editor of most of his books, has never been doubted. But in the absence of any other version of his 'copy', his *Morte Darthur* has been tacitly accepted as a genuine reproduction of the original. 'I have', he writes in his Preface, 'after the symple connynge that God hath sente to me, under the favour and correctyon of al noble lordes and gentylmen, enprysed¹ to enprynte a book of the noble hystories of the sayd kynge Arthur and of certeyn of his knyghtes, after a cotype unto me delyverd, whyche cotype Syr Thomas Malorye dyd take oute of certeyn bookes of Frensshe and reduced it into Englysshe.' Some of the damage due to Caxton's 'symple connynge' can now be repaired.

The essential difference between Malory's treatment of the *Noble Histories* and Caxton's was the difference between the methods of a medieval author or scribe and those of a modern publisher. A medieval 'book' could vary indefinitely in size and in content; it could be either a treatise of any size or a collection of different treatises under one cover.² There is evidence to show that in their original form Malory's works were in keeping with this traditional medieval connotation of the term. The first indication to this effect occurs in Caxton's Preface immediately before the reference

¹ = 'undertaken'.

² Cf. *Oxford Eng. Dict.* s.v. 'book', 1a and b. The other possible meaning of the term was 'a mechanical or logical sub-division of a treatise'. Both meanings were, however, often confused with that of 'volume'. Cf. Horman (*Vulg.* 84): 'A whole boke is comenly called indifferentlye a volume, a boke, a coucher.' Horman attempts to distinguish between them by saying that 'a volume is lesse than a boke, and a boke lesse than a coucher'. Caxton's reference to Malory's 'noble volumes' and to the fact that he made them into a 'book' is a good example of this distinction

to his 'symple connyng'. Speaking of the various Arthurian romances known to him and of his own project, he remarks: 'And many noble volumes be made of hym and of his noble knyghtes in Frensshe, which I have seen and redd beyonde the see, which been not had in our maternal tongue; but in Walsshe ben many, and also in Frensshe, and somme in Englysshe, but nowher nygh alle. *Wherefore, suche as have¹ late ben drawen oute brye-fly into Englysshe, I have . . . enprysed to enprynte*', etc. If this description is correct, Caxton's copy must have consisted of *many noble volumes*. At no point does he refer to them otherwise than in the plural, and the conclusion naturally suggests itself that what he published was a collection of different works which had not previously been made into a single composition.

So much may be inferred from Caxton's own statement. But the inference can now be substantiated with the aid of the Winchester text. Although the manuscript is bound in one volume, it is clearly divided into several different works, and each work with the exception of the last, which lacks a gathering of eight leaves at the end, is concluded by an *explicit*. The first *explicit* is the most significant of all. In it the author bids farewell to the reader and disclaims any intention of writing another Arthurian romance: *Who that woll make any more lette hym seke other bookis of kynge Arthure or of sir Launcelot or sir Trystrams*.² The works which follow show that at some later date he resumed his task. But just as the texts he used were separate romances with few connecting links between them, so his adaptations of them as set out in the Winchester MS. claimed no continuity of narrative, still less of composition. The following remarks, mostly deleted by Caxton, make this abundantly clear:

- (1) F. 70. (*The Tale of King Arthur*): And this booke endyth whereas sir Launcelot and sir Trystrams com to courte. Who that woll make any more lette hym seke other bookis of kynge Arthure or of sir Launcelot or sir Trystrams; for this was drawyn by a knyght presoner sir Thomas Malleorré, that God sende hym good recover. Amen, etc. EXPLICIT.

¹ = 'in so far as they have'.

² See above, pp. xiv-xv.

and put þp in almyces at Calyphny And anone Sir Bors seide
to Sir launcelot Sir Galahad yowre done some salowed þe by
me and after þe my lorde kynge Arthure and all the hote comete
And so ded Sir Pabale for I buryed þe both myne done handis
in the cite of Sarras Also Sir launcelot Sir Galahad prayde
þe to remembre of thys knyght worlde as þe be hys hys wyf
ys does to gyde's more þan halfe a yere Thys ys a tale seide þe launcelot
old I truste to god hys prayer shall aduayle me Thys launcelot
told Sir Bors in hys armys and seide þen þe ar vnto well and
to me for þe and I shall nen deyte in fmdir wyfles once þys
may laste Sir seide he as þe woll so woll I Thys endas þe tale
of the Sankyrall that was breffly drawy oute of fymthe
which ys a tale cronyled for one of the trewest and of þe honest
that ys in thys worlde By Sir Thomas Maloore knyght.
O blessed ihu helpe him thorow hys myght. Amen.

- (2) F. 96. (*The Tale of the Noble King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius*¹): Explicit the Noble Tale betwyxt kynge Arthure and Lucius the Emperour of Rome.
- (3) F. 113. (*The Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake*): Explicit a noble tale of sir Launcelot du Lake.
- (4) F. 148. (*The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney*): And I pray you all that redyth this tale to pray for hym that this wrote, that God sende hym good delyveraunce sone and hastely. Amen. Here endyth the tale of sir Gareth of Orkeney.
- (5) F. 346. (*The Book of Sir Tristram*): Here endyth the secunde boke off syr Trystram de Lyones whyche drawyn was oute of Freynshe by sir Thomas Malleorré, knyght, as Jesu be hys helpe. Amen.
- (6) F. 409. (*The Tale of the Sankgreal*): Thus endith the tale of the Sankgreal that was breffly drawy[n] oute of Freynshe, which ys a tale cronycled for one of the trewyst and of the holyest that ys in thys worlde, by sir Thomas Maleorré, knyght. O, Blessed Jesu helpe hym thorow Hys myght! Amen.²
- (7) F. 449. (*The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*): And bycause I have loste the very mater of Shevalere de Charyot I depart frome the tale of sir Launcelot and here I go unto the *Morte Arthur*, and that caused sir Aggravayne. And here on the othir syde folowyth the moste pyteuous tale of the *Morte Arthure Saunz Gwerdon* par le shyvalere sir Thomas Malleorré, knyght. Jesu, ayedé ly par voutre bone mercy! Amen.

The last of these passages is in a category of its own: it forms a link with the work which follows (*The Morte Arthur*) and suggests no interruption in the process of writing. Nor are the second and third *explicit*s of any great significance, since they may well have been inserted in the course of continuous composition. The remaining four, however, have an unmistakable air of finality: two of them (1 and 4) contain an appeal for 'good deliverance' or 'good recovery'; in the other two (5 and 6) the author gives his name and appeals for God's mercy. No doubt the works to which these endings were attached may eventually have been combined—either by the author or by a scribe—into a composite 'book',

¹ See p. xxxix, footnote 2.

² See facsimile facing p. xxx.

but each work must originally have been conceived and written as a distinct 'volume'.

It was probably for this reason that Malory's romances were allowed to retain certain peculiarities which would have been inadmissible in a continuous narrative. It has often been remarked that some of his characters appear as fully fledged knights before they are born, while some others reappear after their deaths. Tristram is an example of the former anomaly: he is a prominent character in Caxton's Book VII, although his birth is not related until Book VIII. Breunis Saunz Pity, on the other hand, is killed in Book VII and returns to life in the subsequent books. Arthur's expedition to Rome is related twice: first, at great length, in Book V, and again, much more briefly and in a different context, in Book XX. The story of Lancelot is split into two groups of episodes—Book VI and Books XVIII–XIX—but the first group refers to a later period of his life than the second. Similar incongruities occur throughout the collection; their most significant feature is that they are never found within any one of Malory's romances, but invariably between two different works separated by at least one of the *explicits*. Hence they are due not to any habit on Malory's part of contradicting himself, but to the fact that he regarded each of his works as an independent 'tale' or 'book' and did not think it necessary to make them consistent with one another.

When these 'noble volumes' fell into Caxton's hands he realized that, as a matter of practical expediency, he had to make them into a single 'book of King Arthur', not only for reasons of editorial economy, but because in such a form the work would best answer the demand of 'many noble and dyvers gentylmen of thys royaume of Englund' for a 'history of the moost renommed crysten kyng, fyrst and chyef of the thre best crysten and worthy, Kyng Arthur'. He was thus led by force of circumstance to attempt a 'book' in the modern sense, i.e. a homogeneous literary composition 'of sufficient length to make a volume'.¹ Malory's collection seemed at first sight uniform enough to lend itself to such an experiment, and when Caxton undertook to print it he probably

¹ Cf. E. Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, s.v. 'livre'.

did not suspect the difficulties he was to encounter. His first stumbling-block must have been the farewell to the reader signed by the 'knight-prisoner Sir Thomas Malleorre'. Not only was the reference to imprisonment undesirable in a book intended for moral edification, but the passage in which it occurred betrayed the composite character of the series. Naturally enough Caxton deleted the whole passage and dealt in the same way with all subsequent *explicit*s except the very last which conveniently wound up the collection. It is, moreover, highly probable that the wording of this last *explicit* suggested to Caxton his most ingenious device: that of publishing the book under one general title. Malory clearly referred to the last of his romances: *here is the ende of the deth of Arthur*; and neither Caxton nor anyone who saw Malory's ending could think that it applied to any other work. Nothing daunted, Caxton added a colophon saying, *thus endeth this noble and joyous book entyled le morte Darthur*. That this was inappropriate as a general description of the various stories about Arthur and his knights he knew full well, and to make it more acceptable he composed his famous apology: 'Notwythstandyng it treateth of the byrth, lyf, and actes of the sayd kyng Arthur, of his noble knyghtes of the Round Table, theyr mervayllous enquestes and adventures, th'achyevyng of the Sangreal, and in th'ende the dolorous deth and departyng out of thys world of them al.'

The subterfuge proved successful. Ever since Caxton's time Malory's works have been published as a single work and considered not only 'long enough to make a volume', but continuous enough to claim a unity of design and structure. True, only nineteenth-century editors have allowed themselves to be misled by the title *Le Morte Darthur*: Wynkyn de Worde (1498 and 1529), Copland (1557), East (c. 1585), and Stansby (1634) had consistently rejected it, and the first to use it after Caxton was F. Haslewood in his 1816 reprint of Stansby's text. In the following year Southey had the good sense to describe the work by the list of contents which in Caxton's colophon follows the word *Notwythstandyng*, but although his example was followed in Dent's edition of 1893-4, all the modern 'standard' texts

(Wright, Strachey, Sommer, Gollancz, Pollard) have confidently adopted Caxton's fanciful heading with occasional attempts to correct its grammar. This in itself is immaterial. But it is an indication of the extent to which Caxton's stratagem has affected the modern conception of his 'noble book'. It has been assumed that the author of each of its component parts was responsible for the attempt to combine them into a single work, and on the strength of this he has been praised by some and blamed by others in a way which now seems totally irrelevant. In his admirable essay on Malory Sir Edmund Chambers points out some defects in the 'structure' of the *Morte Darthur* and suggests that Malory 'would have done better to have left the *Tristan* alone'.¹ The late R. W. Chambers, while admitting that much of the charm of Malory lies in the 'variety of ideals animating the different stories which he has taken over', remarks that 'this variety does not make for elaborate or consistent drawing of characters'.² At the other end of the scale Malory's readers have endeavoured, with varying degrees of success, to find in the *Morte Darthur* a dramatically developed plot³ and to credit Malory with the intention of producing an epic of Arthur—a vast composition commemorating the rise and fall of Arthur's kingdom and thus presenting, as Andrew Lang puts it, a 'very complete and composite picture of a strangely inherited ideal'.⁴ Saintsbury even goes so far as to say that although sometimes Malory 'may put in what we do not want' (*sic*), 'what is certain is that he, and he only in any language, makes of this vast assemblage of stories one story, and one book'.⁵

In writing this Saintsbury, 'Malory's keenest advocate',⁶ was far from realizing that he was paying a compliment to Caxton, not to Malory. Nor did it ever occur to him or to anyone else that if this view of the *Morte Darthur* were correct, most of what Malory wrote would be irrelevant

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

² *On the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More and his School*, London (E.E.T.S.), 1932, p. clii.

³ Cf. my *Malory*, pp. 93–5.

⁴ *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. H. O. Sommer, vol. iii, p. xix.

⁵ *The English Novel*, London, 1913, p. 25.

⁶ R. W. Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. cxxxviii.

and useless. For judged as a continuous composition, the work would have been 'better' not only without the *Tristan*, but without at least five of the eight romances. Their *raison d'être* is precisely what has been consistently denied them: the distinctive character of each romance. Caxton thought he could improve on them by using the 'simple cunning' of a practical-minded publisher, and it is only fair to say that the appearance of continuity which he gave them enhanced their popularity both in his own time and after. But what Malory's romances have gained from the lucky discovery at Winchester, though it might not have satisfied the 'noble and divers gentylmen of thys royaume' in Caxton's day, has for us an attraction of a higher order. For instead of a single work subordinate to an imaginary principle of 'structure', we now have before us a series of works reflecting in an ever-changing panorama of incident and character a genuine variety of narrative forms and fancies. And while this makes their 'assemblage' less harmonious, it brings out a diversity and richness of tone expressive of the author's design and true to the nature of each of his 'noble volumes'.

2. The Sequence of Malory's 'volumes'

The foregoing account of Caxton's part in the production of the *Morte Darthur*¹ raises a new problem: if there is neither unity nor continuity in the series of works which Caxton published under that title, there is no need to assume that they were all written in the order in which he placed them. True, the order is the same in Caxton and in the Winchester MS., and was presumably the same in their common source; but that source, as our textual data clearly show,² was not Malory's own manuscript: each of his works must have been transcribed more than once before any of them reached either Caxton or the Winchester scribe, and their arrangement in the two extant texts may easily be due to some

¹ The more detailed study of Caxton's treatment of Malory's text, which the discovery of the Winchester MS. now allows to be made, does not fall within the scope of this essay; but some of the essential material will be found in my critical apparatus.

² Cf. *infra*, pp. lxxxvi-xci.

intervening compiler.¹ What, then, was their original sequence?

A possible approach to the problem is suggested by Malory's habit of reproducing passages and scenes from his own work—a curious variety of *amplificatio*.² An example is found in an episode of the *Tale of King Arthur*. An earl offers hospitality to Marhalt and asks him to challenge a redoubtable giant who 'destroys all his lands'. Marhalt wonders whether the giant would fight on horseback or on foot. 'There may no horse bear him', says the earl, and Marhalt, leaving his own horse behind, sets out the next morning to fight the giant. Their battle is described thus:

So on the morne sir Marhaute prayde the erle that one of his men myght brynge hym where the gyaunte was, and so one brought hym where he syghe hym sytte undir a tre of hooly, and many clubbis of ironne and gysernes about hym. So this knyght dressed hym to the gyaunte and put his shyld before hym, and the gyaunte toke an ironne club in his honde, and at the fyrste stroke he clave syr Marhautis shelde. And there he was in grete perell, for the gyaunte was a sly fyghter. But at the laste sir Marhaute smote of his ryght arme aboven the elbow. Than the gyaunte fledde and the knyght affter hym, and so he drove hym into a watir.

All that Malory's French source can offer by way of parallel to this episode is a story of how Gaheriet fought with a giant to rescue a damsel. But the circumstances and the nature of the battle are entirely different: Gaheriet strikes the giant down, rides over his body crushing it with the horse's hoofs, and, finding that he is still alive, cuts off his head.³ To discover the real model of Malory's description

¹ This order is not confirmed by what we know of Malory's sources. To give but one example out of many, the story of Arthur's Roman expedition which in all Arthurian romances serves as a prelude to the concluding episodes of the Cycle—Mordred's treachery and Arthur's death—is more than 900 pages distant from its natural sequel.

² Cf. my *Malory*, pp. 39–41.

³ MS. B.N. fr. 112, f. 54^v: 'Quant Gaheriet voit le jayant a la terre, il n'est pas esbaïs, ains met la main a l'espee et li court sus tout a cheval. Et la ou il se vouloit relever a quelque paine, il le fiert si du pis du cheval qu'il le fait revoler a terre, et li met le cheval tantes fois par dessus le corps que tout le debrise. Et cil se pasme de la grant angoisse qu'il sent, et est tel atornés qu'il ne puet traire a soy ne pié ne main. Et lors descent Gaheriet et li trenche les las du heaume, et trouve que cil estoit en poisoison. Et il pense qu'il en delivrera le pais maintenant. Si dresse l'espee contremont et fiert a deus mains si durement qu'il li fait la teste voler plus d'une lance loing du bu.'

we must turn from his 'French book' to his own work, the *Tale of the Noble King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius*, and the curious account of Arthur's fight with the giant:

'Now, felow,' seyde Arthure, 'wouldist thou ken me where that carle dwellys?' . . . 'Sir conquerroure', seyde the good man, 'beholde yondir two fyrys, for there shalte thou fynde that carle.' . . . Than he paste forth to the creste of the hylle and syghe¹ where he sate at his soupere alone. . . . And therwith sturdely he sterte uppon his leggis and caughte a clubbe in his honde all of clene iron. Than he swappis at the kyng with that kynd² wepyn. He cruysshed downe with the club the coronal³ doune to the colde erthe. The kyng coverde hym with his shyld and rechis a boxe evyn infourmede⁴ in the myddis of his forehede, that the slypped blade unto the brayne rechis. Yet he shappis at sir Arthure, but the kyng shuntys⁵ a lytyll and rechis hym a dynte hyghe uppon the haunche. . . . With that the warlow⁶ wrath Arthure undir, and so they walyrde and tumblyde over the craggis and busshys . . . and they never lefte tyll they fylle⁷ thereas the floode marked.

The analogies are obvious. They are found both in the general trend of the two passages and in every important detail, including the landmarks which help the hero to find the giant ('firs' in the second passage, 'holly tree' in the first) and the manner of the giant's death. Just as Arthur *coverde hym with his shyld*, so Marhalt *put his shyld before hym*, and although Marhalt puts his opponent to flight while Arthur drags him down the hill, in both cases the giant meets with his doom 'in a watir'. But perhaps the two most striking points in the first passage are the vision of *many clubbis of ironne*, a typically epic weapon which Malory could not have found mentioned in any French romance, but which figures prominently in his adaptation of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, and the alliterative phrase *syghe hym sitte*, paralleled by *syghe where he sate* in the second passage.

Since the parallelism between the two descriptions cannot be accidental, either one must have been modelled on the other or both must have had the same source. Now the source of the second passage is known: it is the English alliterative *Morte Arthure*. If it were also the source of the first, it would be impossible to account for the fact that in both cases Malory has made exactly the same choice of

¹ = 'saw'. ² = 'famous'. ³ = 'crown'. ⁴ = 'well-aimed'.
⁵ = 'steps aside'. ⁶ = 'traitor'. ⁷ = 'fell'.

words and phrases and has adapted them in the same way (cf. *where he syghe hym sytte* in the first passage, *syghe where he sate* in the second, and *the syghte had he rechide how unsemly pat sott satt sowpande* in the *Morte Arthure*). The only reasonable theory seems to be that the first passage was modelled on the second, i.e. on Malory's own version of the *Tale of Arthur and Lucius*. This work must, therefore, have been written *before* the *Tale of King Arthur*.

A similar test applied to Malory's other works will show that they were all written *after* the *Tale of King Arthur*. The *Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot* (Caxton's Book VI) refers to 'Sir Pelleas the good knight' as one of the three strongest knights, the other two being Tristram and Lancelot. The character of Sir Pelleas occurs in none of the extant branches of Arthurian romance except the *Suite du Merlin*¹ which Malory used for his *Tale of King Arthur*: until he had read it he could not have thought of the obscure 'chevalier Pellias' as being the equal of Tristram and Lancelot. In the *Tale of Gareth* the hero's mother is erroneously called Morgawse;² the error goes back to a passage peculiar to Malory's adaptation of the French *Merlin* (*The Tale of King Arthur*). He resorts to this work again in the *Book of Tristram*, in the *Grail*, and in the *Book of Launcelot and Guinevere*.³ As for his *Morte Arthur*, both the arrangement of the narrative and one of the *explicit*s quoted above⁴ make it clear that it was a continuation of the *Book of Launcelot and Guinevere*.⁵

¹ The relevant portion of the *Suite* is found in MS. B.N. fr. 112. On Malory's treatment of it see the introductory remarks in the first section of my *Commentary* and Dr. F. Whitehead's article in *Medium Aevum*, ii, pp. 199 ff.

² In all French versions Gareth's mother (the wife of King Lot of Orkanie) is anonymous; *Morgans* is the name of her sister, wife of King Nentres of Sorhaut.

³ In the episode of the healing of Sir Urre which has no counterpart in Malory's sources.

⁴ The *explicit* of the *Book of Launcelot and Guinevere*, p. xxxi.

⁵ In using Malory's borrowings from his own works as indications of the chronological sequence of his romances I have attached no importance to the frequent enumerations of Arthur's knights which the scribes seem to have lengthened at will. A good example is the inclusion, in the Winchester version of the *Tale of Arthur and Lucius*, of Ector de Mares and Pelleas among the knights who fought on Arthur's side against the Roman Emperor (p. 221). Pelleas belongs to the *Tale of King Arthur*, Ector de Mares first appears in the *Tale of Sir Launcelot*. But if on the strength of this we put the passage in question later than these two works, we should be unable to explain either the story of the fight with the giant in the former or the reference

If, then, the *Tale of King Arthur* is later than the *Tale of Arthur and Lucius* and earlier than the rest of Malory's romances, the *Tale of Arthur and Lucius* must be his first extant work and the *Tale of King Arthur* his second. There is no means of ascertaining whether the next in order was the *Launcelot* or the *Gareth*, but it is clear that these were followed by the *Tristram* and the *Grail* and that the *Book of Launcelot and Guinevere* and the *Morte Arthur*, completed in 1469 or 1470, were written last.¹

These few facts added to the knowledge we now have of Malory's sources make it possible to see more clearly how he built up his collection. He began by adapting an English poem which appealed to him mainly because of its bearing on the events of his own time. He did not treat it as a branch of a cycle, but as material for a self-contained work, and as soon as he reached the heroic climax of the story—Arthur's victory over the Romans—he brought it to an end, dismissing the traditional unhappy ending. This was his *Tale of the Noble King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius*,² the least 'romantic' of his works and the least refined, but one which had a decisive influence both on the formation of his style and on his subsequent choice of material. There is every reason to believe that it induced him to 'seek other books of Arthur' and to 'draw from the French' part of the

to Arthur's Roman campaign in the latter (p. 253: 'Sone aftir that kynge Arthure was com from Rome,' &c.). The Winchester scribe who had the whole collection of Malory's works before him must have added these two names, as well as some others, of his own accord. The examples of 'self-imitation' quoted above are in a different category: they occur in Caxton as well as in the Winchester MS. and bear the unmistakable stamp of Malory's workmanship.

¹ As the Winchester MS. is incomplete at the end we have only Caxton's authority for the concluding lines of the *Morte Darthur*. The words *Here is the end of the booke of kyng Arthur & of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table that whan they were hole togyders there was euer an C and xl* may well have been inserted by Caxton. If, however, they belong to Malory, they must refer to his last two works. It is noteworthy that all the attempts hitherto made to analyse the 'dramatic structure' of the *Morte Darthur* bear almost exclusively on the *Book of Launcelot and Guinevere* (Caxton's Bks. XVIII-XIX) and the *Morte Arthur* (Bks. XX-XXI). That these two works form a coherent whole is obvious; but it is perhaps too often forgotten that they represent less than one sixth of the entire collection.

² I have adopted this title and its abbreviations in order to avoid confusion with the *Tale of King Arthur*. The title given in Malory's colophon is *the Tale of the noble kynge Arthure that was Emperoure hymself thorrow dygnyté of his hondys*. Cf. *infra*, p. 247.

Suite du Merlin, a voluminous collection of stories about Arthur, ranging from his coronation to the most fanciful exploits of his knights. Malory was clearly sensitive to the appeal of this type of *roman d'aventures*; but he could not fully accept its 'cyclic' structure, and in his *Tale of King Arthur* he evolved, as it were by reaction, his own narrative technique. When, after an interval, he came back to his task with *The Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot* and *The Tale of Sir Gareth* he was able to apply that technique with great effect, though on a comparatively small scale. In the next stage he turned to the *Tristram* and the *Grail* and set out, as he himself tells us, to rewrite in English the French *Tristan de Léonois* and the *Queste del Saint Graal*. In extent this was his most ambitious enterprise; but in point of method it was less original than any of his previous adaptations from the French. Its chief importance lay in the fact that the very nature of the sources he had to use suggested to him a new approach to the art of writing. In spite of the vast amount of spurious episodic matter which had clustered round their basic themes, the French prose *Tristan* and the *Queste del Saint Graal* had preserved the essentials of the two greatest medieval stories and something of their original significance. Through these two romances, and with their aid, Malory was able to discover what he needed above all: his own method of conveying sentiment through fiction. And so his last two works—*The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere* and the *Morte Arthur*—could reach a degree of independence and convincingness unparalleled in his earlier books, or indeed in any earlier prose version of Arthurian romance, and retain their appeal long after their models had been forgotten.

CHAPTER III

THE WRITER'S PROGRESS

I. *Style*

PERHAPS the most significant conclusion to be drawn from the previous chapter is that Malory began his work with the *Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius*. It would be tempting to dwell at length on the implications of this change in the traditional idea of the order of his romances. For it suggests that, contrary to the generally accepted view, he first became familiar with the Arthurian legend not through 'French books' but through an English poem, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. The epic mood of the fourteenth-century poet, so characteristic of the alliterative revival, his combination of stirring realism with heroic feeling, and above all the consistent archaism of metre, manner, and spirit—these were indeed worthy models for a writer who endeavoured to raise the romantic tales of Arthur to a heroic level. That Malory's whole conception of his theme was formed under the influence of the English epic of Arthur now seems certain, and it is a new and helpful sidelight on the continuity of the English tradition that by the time Malory came to 'reduce' his French books into English his attitude to Arthurian knighthood had been fixed in his mind by his reading of native poetry.

No less decisive was the effect of the alliterative poem on the formation of his style. Historians of English prose have put him 'out of the general line of progress', both as regards matter and form.¹ 'The world to which the *Morte Darthur* belongs', writes R. W. Chambers, 'had passed away before the book was finished', and 'there was little room for Arthurian knighthood in the England of the *Paston Letters*'.² And yet—'such is the power of style that Malory, at the eleventh hour, was able to go over the old ground, and make

¹ G. Saintsbury, *A First Book of English Literature*, 1914, p. 60.

² R. W. Chambers, *On the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More and his School*, 1932, p. cxxxix.

it live once more'. Is this revival of a long-forgotten world to be regarded simply as a miracle performed by a genius without antecedents, by a writer 'out of the general line of progress', who wrought his language in the void? Such a thought would be contrary to all we know of the history of prose, for whatever individual greatness it may achieve, literary prose, unlike poetry, is, in the noblest sense of the term, an 'institution', 'part of the equipment of a civilization, part of its heritable wealth, like its laws, or its system of schooling, or its tradition of skilled craftsmanship'.¹ This view has been corroborated by the emphasis recently placed on the continuous development of English prose from the earliest times to the Renaissance. Yet the critic to whom we owe the best account of the problem finds no room for Malory in the lineage of English writers and leaves him in complete, if enviable, isolation. The achievements of Peacock, of Fortescue, of Tyndale and Coverdale, and the succession of translations of the Bible closed by the Authorized Version of 1611 can all be properly understood 'when we see them against the continuous background of English devotional prose';² but no such background exists for Malory. Nor can he claim the universal heritage of Latin diction and syntax—the training-ground of most of his contemporaries. How, then, does he succeed in the solitary task of producing 'as finished an instrument in its way as any prose the sixteenth century can show, but with the freshness of the early world still upon it'?³

To this there was no answer as long as it was thought that Malory began his work with a translation from the French. But once it is realized that his first experience as a prose writer was an adaptation of an English poem, the possibility of accounting for what he did will appear far less remote. His object in adapting the *Morte Arthure* was to rewrite an alliterative poem in a form accessible to fifteenth-century readers. To do this it was not enough to reduce the amount of alliteration and modernize the vocabulary. The whole

¹ J. S. Phillimore, 'Blessed Thomas More and the Arrest of Humanism in England', *Dublin Review*, vol. cliii, p. 8.

² R. W. Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. cxxxv.

³ E. K. Chambers, *Sir Thomas Malory*, pp. 6-7.

texture of the poem had to undergo a radical change, similar to that which occurred in the transition from verse to prose romances in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century France. Of the numerous devices which facilitated this transition one was of particular importance: the reduction of rhetorical matter. It is perhaps best illustrated by the opening paragraph of the French prose romance entitled *Le Chevalier au Cygne*. The author states that he has unrhymed his verse original *for the sake of brevity*: poetry, he adds, is 'very enjoyable and very beautiful, but very lengthy'.¹ At first one may wonder why he should blame poetry for its 'length' when it is well known that in nearly every case the prose renderings of early poems far exceeded them in volume. The answer is that by 'length' he means something other than volume. What he dislikes is not the size of the poem, but the rhetorical elaboration which had become an integral part of the art of poetry. To 'shorten' a work means to him and to his contemporaries to relieve it of such unnecessary burdens as ornaments of description, the artificial lengthening of speeches, and the inflated phraseology used in descriptions and speeches alike. The total length of the work need not be reduced; it may in fact be considerably increased by the addition of fresh narrative material, provided that the story is told, as another anonymous prose writer puts it, 'in clearer and more intelligible language'.²

Malory no doubt thought likewise, for his problem was similar to that which confronted all late medieval prose writers. The stylistic and narrative patterns of the *Morte Arthure* must have appeared to him too ornate and too diffuse — 'too lengthy', as the author of *Le Chevalier au Cygne* would have said. This type of 'length' could not have been remedied by sheer omission of complete passages. The simplification had to be both more radical and less mechanical: it had to be applied on a strictly selective principle to the entire text of the poem. And the most remarkable result of it was that the word-material of the alliterative epic aided by the author's instinctive choice produced a new and powerful prose style,

¹ 'moult plaisans et moult bele, mais moult est longue' (MS. B.N. fr. 781).

² 'en plus cler et entendible langage' (*Maugis d'Aigremont*, Paris, Michel le Noir, 1518, f. LVIIr, col. A).

a style 'too straightforward to be archaic',¹ and yet 'just old enough to allure and mark the age'.²

Placed side by side with its source, the newly discovered text of Malory's *Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius* reveals the nature of this process and the subtle working of the stylistic genius which directed its application. A few examples will suffice.³ As Arthur approaches the walls of a beleaguered city, 'without shield save his bare harness', he is warned by Sir Florence that it is folly to face the enemy unarmed. In Malory's version this is his reply:

'And thow be aferde', seyde kyng Arthure, 'I rede the faste fle, for they wynne no worshyp of me but to waste their toolys. For there shall never harlot⁴ have happe, by the helpe of oure Lord, to kylle a crowned kynge that with creyme is anoynted.'

The 'longer' version—that of the poem—is as follows:

*'Ife thow be rade', quod the kyng, 'I rede thow ryde uttere,
Lesse pat pey rywe the with theire rownnd wapyn.
Thow arte bot a fawntkyn, no ferly me thynkkys!
Dou will be flayed for a flye, pat on thy flesche lyghttes.
I am nothyng agaste, so me Gode helpe!
Dof siche gadlynges be greuede, it greues me bot lyttill;
Thay wyn no wirchipe of me bot wastys theire takle;
They sall wante, or I weende, I wage myn hevede!
Sall neuer harlotte haue happe, thorowe helpe of my Lorde,
To kyll a corownde kynge, with krysom enoyntede!'*⁵

¹ *Cambridge History of English Literature*, ii. 337.

² Andrew Lang, *Le Morte Darthur* (Introduction to Sommer's edition), vol. iii, p. xxi.

³ In his *History of the English Prose Rhythm* (London, 1912) G. Saintsbury has given interesting examples of Malory's treatment of the stanzaic *Morte Arthure* and of the way in which 'out of the substance of verse he has woven quite a new rhythm, accompanying and modulating graceful and almost majestic prose of the best type'. But as Malory did not discover the stanzaic *Morte Arthure* until he had begun his very last work, comparisons with this poem are of little value for the study of the genesis of his style. The alliterative *Morte Arthure* and Malory's adaptation of it provide far more significant instances of his method of 'patching in' some of the bright stitches of his predecessor, 'not fearing but welcoming, and mustering them into a distinct prose rhythm—treating them, in fact, just as Ruskin does his doses of blank verse'.

⁴ = 'rascal'.

⁵ *Morte Arthure*, ed. Björkman, 2438–47. Here is a literal translation: 'If you are afraid', said the king, 'I advise you to ride away, lest they wound you with their round weapons. You are but a child and no wonder, as it seems to me. You would be afraid of a fly if it alighted on your flesh. I am not afraid, so may God help me! I do not mind if such worthless creatures come to grief. They will gain no honour

Out of the ten lines of the poem Malory has only taken four, but with what a remarkable sense of stylistic emphasis! The choice alone suffices for his purpose, and he need make no change in the lines he borrows: they fully convey the sense of the speech, and more. *And thow be aferde I rede the faste fle* does not only cover the meaning of the first six lines, but gains enormously from being relieved of epic ornamentation. Malory's Arthur need not say that he is 'nothyng agaste'; his fearlessness is brought home more forcibly by his proud retort to the coward. Nor is there any room in Malory's context for such nerveless phrases as *I wage myn hevede*. And while the last two lines of the speech, which bear the full weight of Arthur's unflinching faith in the sanctity of his crown, remain intact, they are thrown into greater relief: in the *Morte Arthure* they are but the tail end of a long discourse; in Malory they sound like a call to arms.

But the selection of complete lines is by no means Malory's only method of 'reduction'. Some of his sentences consist of words and phrases which in his source are scattered over long passages. When, after his victory over the giant, Arthur divides the spoils among his people he says: '*Looke that the goodys be skyffted,¹ that none playne of his parte*'—a perfect example of Malory's sentence-structure with its characteristic cadence and crisp idiom. And yet it is but a mosaic of words borrowed from half a dozen lines of the poem:

He somond þan þe schippemen scharpely þeraftyre
To schake furthe with þe schyremen to *schifte þe gudez*:
'All þe myche tresour, þat traytour had wonnen,
To comouns of the contré, clergie and oper,
Luke it be done and delte to my dere pople,
That none pleyne of theire parte, o peyne of þour lyfez.'²

Used in this way the words and phrases lifted from the text cannot always preserve their original meaning, but from from me, but they will waste their weapons. I will wager my head that before I go away they will fail. The Lord will never allow a rascal to succeed in killing a crowned king who has been anointed with chrism.'

¹ = 'divided'.

² 'Thereupon he quickly summoned the sailors to go with the sheriffs to divide the treasure: "See to it that all this great treasure which that traitor gained is divided among my dear people, whether they be commoners, clergy, or others, so that no one complains of his share, on peril of your lives"' (ll. 1212-17).

the prose writer's point of view this is not too high a price to pay for brevity. Malory's *doleful dragon* which Arthur sees in his dream, is a contraction of two alliterative lines in which the two words stand far apart,¹ while the description of the 'careful widow' who '*sate sorowyng*' is but an adaptation of a passage relating how the king greeted the widow with *sittande wordex*.² Such transpositions are, however, much less frequent than genuine abridgement, by means of which words and phrases selected from the poem are woven into the most astonishing tissue of pure and straightforward prose. *Than the kynge yode up to the creste of the cragge, and than he comforted hymself with the colde wynde*. Few masters of style have matched the descriptive force of this sentence. But to see how it was made we need but glance at the corresponding lines in the *Morte Arthure*:

*The kyng coueris þe cragge wyth cloughes full hye,
To the creste of the clyffe he clymbez on lofte;
Keste vpe hys vmbre, and kenly he lukes,
Caughte of þe colde wynde, to comforte hym seluen.*

Every now and then, lulled by the cadence of the poem, Malory reproduces complete groups of three or four lines with few, if any, alterations; but he never abandons his real task for more than a brief spell. With a persistence amounting to genius he manufactures out of a somewhat commonplace web of alliterative verse a language endowed with a simplicity and power all its own. And when towards the

¹ . . . a *dragone* engowschede, dredfull to schewe,
Deuorande a dolphyn with *dolefull* lates (*Morte Arthure*, 2054-5).

² = 'fitting words'. Further examples will be found in the *Commentary*. From this method of transcription there is but one step to another device which may be illustrated by the following parallels:

<i>Morte Arthure</i>	<i>Malory</i>
LAUGHTE hym vpe full louelyly (2292):	LYFFTE hym up lordely (p. 225)
sette thane appon oure SERE knyghttez (1847):	sette SORE on oure knyghtes
	(p. 216)

When Malory applies this device to his French sources the result is even more startling. On one occasion the French *enire* becomes *under*, and on another Balin and his companion '*stable* their horsis' because the French has *la feste estoit par tel maniere establee*. The mysterious adjective *amyvestyall* which no commentator has yet been able to explain (p. 152: *his amyvestyall countenaunce*) is a compound of three French words totally meaningless outside their context: 'Nous n'aviens nes poissanche de metre fors nos alainnes, *ains estions del tout aussi comme mors*' (see *Commentary*, note 152. 4).

end of the *Tale* he abandons his source, his prose retains all the robust eloquence of epic and all the natural freshness of a living idiom:

'Ye say well', seyde the kynge, 'for inowghe is as good as a feste, for to attemte God overmuch I holde hit not wysedom. And therefore make you all redy and turne we into Ingelonde.' Than there was trussynge of harneyse with caryage full noble, and the kynge toke his leve of the holy fadir the Pope and patryarkys and cardynals and senatoures full ryche, and leffte good governaunce in that noble cité and all the contrays of Rome for to warde and to kepe on payne of deth, that in no wyse his commaundement be brokyn.

It has been said of Goldsmith that he was 'Augustan and also sentimental and rural without discordance', because he had 'the old and the new in such just proportion that there was no conflict'.¹ It is a similar kind of harmony that we find in Malory when by a judicious arrangement of word-material he creates the new out of the old.² The secret of it escapes analysis; but in the light of the new text of Malory we can at least observe the beginning and the end of the process, gauge the distance between them, and so approach, with a keener sense of its magnitude, the unexpounded miracle of style.³

¹ T. S. Eliot, Introduction to *London*, by Samuel Johnson.

² I have deliberately refrained from analysing the most elusive aspect of Malory's style, its rhythm. Saintsbury's attempt to reduce it to metrical patterns has led him to the unsatisfying conclusion that 'you may resolve sentence after sentence into iambs pure, iambs extended by a precedent short into anapæsts and iambs, or curling over with a short suffix into amphibrachs, and so getting into the trochee' (*A History of English Prose Rhythm*, p. 90). This leaves singularly few metres into which Malory's prose could *not* be resolved. More helpful is the remark that 'the dominant of Malory's rhythm is mainly iambic, though he does not neglect the precious inheritance of the trochaic or amphibrachic ending' (ibid.). Malory's use of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* may well account for this. In the poem the metre most frequently used in the first half of the line is the amphibrach, and in a number of cases Malory either preserves it intact or shortens it to an iamb.

³ Of the numerous attempts to account for the survival of Malory's work the following is the most worthy of note: 'Le hasard voulut qu'il fût bon écrivain, si bon que sa prose n'a presque pas vieilli. Aussi cette ample composition, la *Morte d'Arthur*, comme il l'avait intitulée, imprimée d'abord en 1485 par les presses vénérables de Caxton, maintes fois réimprimée au temps d'Elisabeth et jusqu'en plein dix-septième siècle, et tout au long du dix-neuvième en des éditions sans nombre, demeure-t-elle un livre classique, l'un des joyaux du trésor qui forme, en Angleterre, le patrimoine spirituel de la nation. . . . Mystérieux pouvoir du goût, d'une langue saine, d'un bon style! Ce Malory ne fut qu'un traducteur, un adaptateur: sans lui pourtant, dans l'Angleterre d'aujourd'hui, ni la poésie, ni la pensée, ni

2. Structure

Next after the *Tale of Arthur and Lucius* came the *Tale of King Arthur*—a retrospective account of the early history of Arthur's kingdom, *from the maryage of Kyng Uther unto Kyng Arthure that regned aftir hym and ded many batayles*. But when Malory opened his first 'French book' in the hope of finding some material for the story, he encountered difficulties for which the simple technique he had so far acquired offered no solution. His English source was, in spite of its 'length', a straightforward account of certain pseudo-historical episodes placed in their natural order, and it was comparatively easy, by a mere process of 'reduction', to quicken its pace and remove some of the ornaments of epic style. The problem Malory now had to face was of a totally different kind.

His French romance was a combination of the prose *Merlin* with its sequel, the *Suite du Merlin*.¹ Both were late compositions, the last in date of all the branches of the Arthurian prose Cycle. Their main attraction for Malory was that they supplied the natural beginning of the Arthur story by elaborating some of the episodes recorded in the chronicles of Wace and Geoffrey of Monmouth. But he soon found to his dismay that their treatment of the chronicle material was singularly unlike what he had seen in the *Morte Arthure*; for not only did they lengthen the pseudo-historical matter by the addition of episodes completely foreign to it, but their method of presenting these episodes was anything but normal. Adventures were piled up one upon the other without any apparent sequence or design, and innumerable personages, mostly anonymous, were introduced in a wild succession. Every now and then they stopped to lay lance in rest and overthrow one another, and then swore eternal friendship and rode away.² The purpose of their encounters and pursuits was vague, and their tasks were seldom fulfilled: they met and parted and met again, each intent at first on following his particular 'quest', and *l'art ne seraient tout à fait ce qu'ils sont*' (Joseph Bédier, Préface aux *Romans de la Table Ronde nouvellement rédigés par Jacques Boulenger*, pp. iv-v).

¹ For details see the relevant section of the *Commentary*.

² Cf. E. K. Chambers, *Sir Thomas Malory*, p. 6.

yet prepared at any time to be diverted from it to other adventures and undertakings. As a result, 'the basic thought became subsidiary, the episode increasingly prominent, the slowing of the action defeated any attempt to reach an end, and the story lost all purpose'. In these words Gustav Gröber described half a century ago the methods used by medieval prose writers.¹ But there is reason to believe that at a much earlier date their methods were condemned on similar grounds, and the often quoted remark of the Canon of Toledo in *Don Quixote* remains to this day the most characteristic expression of the modern view: 'I have never yet', he says, 'seen a book of chivalry complete in all its parts, so that the middle agrees with the beginning and the end with the beginning and the middle; but they seem to construct their stories with such a multitude of members as though they meant to produce a monster rather than a well-proportioned figure.'²

Few readers of the French Arthurian Cycle would disagree with this criticism.³ Still fewer would wonder whether neglect of *structure* in the modern sense of the term necessarily implied the absence of a *method of composition*. Gröber may have blamed the cyclic works for their lack of a *Grundgedanke*, and Cervantes may have thought them 'monstrous' because they formed no consistent whole; but it remains to be seen whether the criteria of a *Grundgedanke* or of a 'well-proportioned figure' are not in this case misleading, and whether behind the apparent deformity and incoherence of the prose romances there is not to be found an architectural design so unlike our own conception of a story that we inevitably fail to perceive it. One *a priori* reason for suspecting the existence of such a design is that if each branch of the Cycle were a mere collection of episodes haphazardly put together, the Cycle would naturally fall into as many

¹ *Grundriss der romanischen Philologie*, ii, p. 726.

² *Don Quixote*, Part I, ch. xlvii.

³ M. Jean Frappier, who has recently edited the French *Mort Artu* (Paris, 1936), enters a special plea for this work: 'Le judicieux chanoine de Tolède ne connaissait pas notre *Mort Artu*; sinon, il est permis de penser qu'il aurait volontiers donné l'absolution à ce livre de chevalerie en vertu de l'unité et de la robuste structure de son plan.' For a statement of the opposite view see F. Lot, *Étude sur le Lancelot en prose*, pp. 268-76.

independent sections. In reality, the reverse is the case: none of the branches of the Cycle can be conveniently subdivided, and no subdivisions exist in the manuscripts. Apart from certain interpolations which can easily be detached from the main body of the work, few of the episodes, if any, appear as self-contained units. 'Aucune aventure', writes Ferdinand Lot, 'ne forme un tout se suffisant à lui-même. D'une part, des épisodes antérieurs, laissés provisoirement de côté, y prolongent des ramifications; d'autre part, des épisodes subséquents, proches ou lointains, y sont amorcés.'¹ Judged by our standards this would seem to be a strange paradox. On the one hand, the prose romances are admittedly the very negation of the classical principle of composition: the beginning does not 'agree' with the middle, nor the middle with the end; on the other, they seem to obey the agelong rule that no part can be removed without affecting the whole. There must, then, be something which binds them together, invisible though it is to the modern eye: some peculiar device which, while making the various parts of the Cycle inseparable from one another, fails to weld them into a harmonious whole.

Perhaps the easiest way to discover the nature and the working of this device is to draw an analogy with the technique of tapestry. Just as in a tapestry each thread alternates with an endless variety of others, so in the early prose romances of the Arthurian group numerous seemingly independent episodes or 'motifs' are interwoven in a manner which makes it possible for each episode to be set aside at any moment and resumed later. No single stretch of such a narrative can be complete in itself any more than a stitch in a woven fabric; the sequel may appear at any moment, however long the interval. But the resemblance goes no further, for unlike the finished tapestry a branch of a prose romance has as a rule no natural conclusion; when the author brings it to a close he simply cuts the threads at arbitrarily chosen points, and anyone who chooses to pick them up and interweave them in a similar fashion can continue the work indefinitely. Hence the 'multitude of members' and the prodigious growth of the Arthurian tradition enlarged

¹ Ferdinand Lot, *Étude sur le Lancelot en prose*, Paris, 1918, p. 17.

at each stage of its progress by continuations of earlier works.

The origin of this process may be sought in the combination of two rules of literary composition laid down by contemporary theorists: the *ordo artificialis* and the *digressio*. The former goes back to classical rhetoric;¹ the latter is a characteristically medieval invention and has no exact parallel in classical treatises. Geoffroi de Vinsauf was one of the first to insist on its usefulness and to distinguish two kinds of *digressio*: *Unus modus digressionis est quando digredimur in materia ad aliam partem materiae; alius modus, quando digredimur a materia ad aliud extra materiam*.² It is doubtful whether Geoffroi de Vinsauf or any other medieval rhetorician had in mind anything approaching the methods of thirteenth-century romance writers,³ but as long as theoretical precepts were applied literally, without much regard for their purpose,⁴ the advice to proceed both *ad aliam partem materiae* by way of anticipation, and *ad aliud extra materiam* by way of digression proper, combined as it was with the various prescriptions of the *ordo artificialis*,⁵ could well

¹ Cf. Horace, *Ars poetica*, 42-5; Martianus Capella, *De Rhetorica*, 30 (ed. Halm, *Rhet. min.*, p. 472); Sulpicius Victor, *Institutiones oratoriae*, 14 (Halm, p. 320). For the medieval treatment of *ordo artificialis* see *Scholia vindobonensia ad Horatii artem poeticam*, ed. Zechmeister (1877); Mathieu de Vendôme, *Ars Versificatoria* (ed. Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du xiii^e et du xiiii^e siècle*), i. 3-13; Geoffroi de Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, 101-25.

² *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi* (ed. Faral, op. cit.), ii. 2, 17. The first kind of digression is further explained as follows: 'A materia ad aliam partem materiae, quando omittimus illam partem materiae quae proxima est et aliam quae sequitur primam assumimus.'

³ The second kind of digression—*ad aliud extra materiam*—was primarily intended for purposes of comparison or simile (cf. loc. cit. ii. 2, 21: 'Digredimur etiam a materia ad aliud extra materiam, quando scilicet inducimus comparationes sive similitudines, ut eas aptemus materiae'), but it was applied on a larger and more varied scale. Its extreme form was, and still is, 'the story in the story'.

⁴ Cf. Faral, op. cit., p. 60: 'L'enseignement des arts poétiques, qui ne brille pas par l'envergure des conceptions, paraît avoir agi précisément par ce qu'il contenait de plus superficiel et de plus mécanique; mais ç'a été une action très réelle, dont la littérature porte les marques.'

⁵ Cf. Geoffroi de Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, 101 ff.:

Ordinis est primus sterilis, ramusque secundus
Fertilis et mira succrescit origine ramus
In ramos, solus in plures, unus in octo.
Circiter hanc artem fortasse videtur et aer
Nubilus, et limes salebrosus, et ostia clausa,
Et res nodosa. Quocirca sequentia verba

induce the romance writers to build up their narrative in such a way that each episode appeared to be a digression from the previous one and at the same time a sequel to some earlier unfinished story. There are good examples of this technique in the poems of Chrestien de Troyes; in the works of his successors—particularly in the continuations of his *Conte del Graal*—it assumes still greater importance; and with the romances centring on the *Lancelot-Graal* it asserts itself as the dominating feature of the *genre*.¹

Malory's handling of his sources shows how strongly he disliked this type of composition. With varying degrees of success, but with remarkable consistency, he endeavoured to do two things: to reduce the bulk of the stories and to alter their arrangement. Of the processes he employed the simplest was mechanical reduction: he seldom reproduced an episode in full and frequently omitted entire sections of his source.² More elaborate was the device of 'telescoping': whereas the French prose writers deliberately complicated their material by duplicating episodes and inventing new characters, Malory often simplified his by making either two different scenes or two characters into one.³ But his most successful and historically most significant contribution to the technique of the prose tale was his attempt to substitute for the method of 'interweaving' a more modern treatment of narrative.

The source of his *Tale of King Arthur* contained three main groups of episodes interspersed with various adventures of Arthur's knights: Arthur's wars against the enemies of his kingdom, the life and death of Merlin the enchanter, and the treacherous machinations of Morgan le Fay, Arthur's half-sister. How these three themes were interwoven with

Sunt hujus morbi medici: speculeris in illis;
Invenietur ibi qua purges luce tenebras,
Quo pede transcurras salebras, qua clave recludas
Ostia, quo digito solvas nodosa. Patentem
Ecce viam!

¹ Cf. F. Lot, loc. cit.: 'De ce procédé de l'entrelacement les exemples se présentent sous la plume. Ils sont si nombreux qu'à les vouloir énumérer on raconterait le *Lancelot* d'un bout à l'autre.'

² The rate of condensation varies from 1:2 to 1:8. Cf. my *Malory*, pp. 30-1.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 34-8. Numerous other illustrations will be found in the *Commentary*.

one another may be seen from the following brief summary of the middle portion of the story (*Huth Merlin*, ff. 184-220):

While Merlin and Nivene—'la damoisele chaceresse', with whom Merlin is in love—are visiting the land of King Ban of Benoic, they discover the Lake of Diana. Merlin tells Nivene how the great huntress disposed of her unfortunate lover Faunus by shutting him up in a tomb, and how she was afterwards punished for it. He also tells Nivene that Arthur is in imminent danger from his foes. Nivene urges him to return to Great Britain and rescue the king. Meanwhile Arthur repulses the attack of five hostile kings who have invaded his lands and massacred his men. One day he goes hunting in the forest of Camelot with Urience and Accolon; as they are busy quartering the stag by the side of a river, they see a beautifully decorated ship approaching the bank. Twelve damsels welcome them on board and offer them hospitality. The next morning the three hunters find themselves transported by enchantment to three different places: Urience to his own bed, Arthur to a prison, and Accolon to a meadow, where he is met by a dwarf who brings him Arthur's sword, Excalibur. Arthur's fellow prisoners tell him that their captor, Domas, would release them if he could find among them a champion ready to fight his brother. Arthur takes up the challenge. Nivene having rid herself of Merlin by shutting him up in a rock, 'qu'il ne fu puis nus qui peust veoir Merlin ne mort ne vif', goes to watch Arthur's battle with Domas's brother. But Morgan le Fay has in the meantime substituted Accolon for Arthur's original opponent. Armed with Arthur's sword, Accolon at first proves the stronger, but Nivene casts a spell upon him and makes him drop the magic weapon. Arthur picks it up and defeats Accolon with a few strokes. Morgan then attempts to murder in their sleep first her husband Urience, then Arthur. The former is saved by Morgan's own son, Ivain, while the latter escapes by waking up. Morgan and her men are put to flight, and Ivain is banished from the court: 'Car certes', says Arthur, 'je ne porroie pas cuidier que vous peussies estre preudom ne loial, pour le dyable dont vous estes issus.' This is the beginning of a new series of adventures in which Ivain, Gauvain, and Morhout play the leading parts.

It will be observed that the three basic themes alternate here in the following order: Merlin and Nivene (*a*¹), Arthur's wars (*b*), Morgan le Fay (*c*¹), Merlin and Nivene (*a*²), Morgan le Fay (*c*²). Now in Malory's account these themes, instead of being interwoven, are separated from one another and related in strict sequence. The order of events

is not $a^1 b c^1 a^2 c^2$, but $a^1 a^2 b c^1 c^2$; the three threads of the narrative are unravelled and straightened out so as to form in each case a consistent and self-contained set of adventures. The same process is applied on a smaller scale in each important subdivision of the story. After the story of the magic ship the French source gives a brief account of the situation of the three hunters, Urience, Arthur, and Accolon, on their awakening, and then deals with their particular adventures in the reverse order: Accolon, Arthur, Urience. Malory, on the other hand, first disposes of Urience, then combines two series of Arthur's adventures into one (the awakening and the resolve to fight for Domas), and lastly deals in a similar fashion with Accolon. Thus a simple narrative, with each sequence of events beginning when the other is at an end, is substituted for the elaborate chain of interlocked episodes.

The unravelling of a fabric such as that of the French romance is, however, no easy process, and every now and then, having failed to disentangle the full length of the thread at the proper time, Malory finds himself with the loose end of it on his hands. The story of Morgan le Fay may again be used as an example. In the French version Morgan's attempt to murder Urience is a natural sequel to the adventure of the magic ship. In Malory the connexion is broken, and the scene of the attempted murder is introduced without any reference to its antecedent:

The meanewhyle Morgan le Fay had wente kynge Arthure had bene ded. *So on a day* she aspyed kynge Uryence lay on slepe on his bedde; than she callyd unto hir a mayden of her counseyle and sayde, 'Go fecche me my lordes swerde, for I saw never bettir tyme to sle hym than now'.

Malory was well aware that in the original story Morgan le Fay did not discover Urience in his bed by chance 'on a day', but caused him to be brought there from the ship in order to murder him. The deliberate removal of the connecting link between the adventure of the ship and the attempted murder shows how anxious Malory was to avoid what the French romance writers valued above all; the impression that each episode either anticipated or continued *aliam partem materiae* with long intervals of extraneous

matter between them. When this had not been achieved by means of a rearrangement of material, that is to say, when one or more elements of a sequence still remained separated from the rest, Malory either omitted them altogether or presented them as independent episodes: the pattern $a^1 b c^1 a^2 c^2$, if not already simplified by a consistent grouping of its component parts, was reduced to either $a^1 b c^1$ or $a^1 b c^1 d e$, thus closely approximating to the modern type of narrative.

The *Tale of King Arthur* was but the first attempt in this direction, highly characteristic of Malory's attitude to his task, yet hardly comparable to his ultimate achievement. His next two 'tales'—the *Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake* and the *Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney*—reveal a real mastery of technique. In the opening chapters of the *Noble Tale* Lancelot, accompanied by Lionel, starts on his quest of adventures. As they lie asleep under a tree on a hot day there begin two distinct series of episodes: Lionel is captured by Tarquyn, and Lancelot by four queens who keep him prisoner in one of their castles. There Lancelot finds himself faced with the choice of either remaining a prisoner to the end of his days or becoming a paramour of one of the queens. Aided by a damsel he escapes, and to reward her for her service goes to a tournament and defeats the opponents of her father, King Bagdemagus. At this point the French romance introduces a digression equal in length to 500 pages of our text. Malory boldly dismisses it and, determined as he is to keep to the initial episode of his *Tale*, passes straight on to Lancelot's quest of Lionel: Lancelot kills Lionel's captor, Tarquyn, releases the other prisoners, and to reward another damsel for her assistance disposes of Perys de Foreste Savage, an enemy of knights-errant. Finally he rids the people of the Castle of Tintagel of the tyranny of two giants by cleaving the head of one and cutting the other in two. All this forms a consistent account, with 'a beginning, a middle and an end'. Some traces of 'interweavings' still remain, for Malory cannot altogether dismiss all the allusions, anticipations, and 'cross-links' which abound in his source; but he succeeds in disentangling from the mass of material which it contains the outline of a continuous narrative without depriving it of its essentially adventurous

character. The result is a *roman d'aventures* rebuilt in accordance with a new principle of composition, and more palatable to the modern reader than any part of the original *Lancelot-Graal*.

A similar result was sometimes achieved by the French writers themselves. As the threads of the narrative lengthened and its pattern grew both in size and in complexity, the tendency arose to isolate certain episodes from their context and to treat them as 'stories in a story'. This was primarily the result of an excessively elaborate use of the 'tapestry' technique; but it was also the beginning of a new *genre*. Each composition as a whole became more and more unwieldy, but its various parts gradually acquired more shape and sequence; and the cohesion which was no longer discernible in the larger works occasionally reappeared in what remained of their component elements. And so by a mere process of internal multiplication the over-developed varieties of medieval romantic fiction gave rise, and eventually yielded their place, to simpler and more enduring forms of narrative art.

There is reason to believe that the source of Malory's *Tale of Gareth* was an example of this process. It formed a branch of the prose *Tristan*,¹ but was virtually independent of it. Like Malory's *Tale of Gareth*, it was to all intents and purposes a self-contained account of the progress of a young nobleman who on his arrival at Arthur's court was ridiculed by Kay, the traditional jester, entered Arthur's service as an obscure page, soon distinguished himself by a series of daring exploits, and finally achieved a degree of fame equalled only by Lancelot and Tristram. In the development of prose fiction this was a transition type inasmuch as it still retained some connexion with the romance of which it was a branch. By separating it from the *Tristan* and giving it an independent place Malory merely went a step farther in the direction suggested by his French models. But the result was a story with a well-circumscribed plot, a real sense of completeness, and a harmonious working out of the central theme; a story which can serve as a genuine

¹ Cf. my article on the 'Romance of Gaheret' in *Medium Aevum*, vol. i, pp. 157-67 and the relevant section of the *Commentary*.

example of the technique of a modern tale applied to medieval romance.

From these three works—the *Tale of King Arthur*, the *Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake*, and the *Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney*—Malory's role in literary history would thus appear to be the very opposite of that which has hitherto been assigned to him. His contribution would seem to consist not in making one story out of a 'vast assemblage' of stories, but in breaking up the complicated structure of earlier fiction and in using its fragments for smaller narrative patterns. He no doubt had, as Saintsbury aptly puts it, 'the sense of *grasp*, the power to put his finger and to keep it on the central pulse and nerve of the story'.¹ But the 'story' should not be taken to mean the entire collection of his works, for neither he nor anyone else familiar with the structural peculiarities of Arthurian romances could have conceived of them as a single whole or attempted to put them together in sufficient shape. What was uppermost in the minds of their authors and readers was not their general design but the opportunity they offered of following innumerable diverging tracks of narrative one after another.² Little could have been gained by reducing these to a carefully balanced structure with a strict subordination of all its parts to a single *leitmotiv*. Malory's conception of his task was more realistic. He did not try, as others have done since, to fuse all his French books into a single Arthurian epic. What he endeavoured to do was to extract from them a series of short and well-defined tales. In so far as he succeeded he found himself in harmony with the general trend of prose fiction. For in the history of prose the natural outcome of cyclic romances was not the long novel of to-day but the *nouvelle*, or the short novel, of the last centuries of the Middle Ages.³ Even at a later period the *romans à tiroirs*—that curious

¹ *History of the English Novel*, p. 27.

² In Rilke's words, 'wie ein Mädchen das Blumen bindet, nachdenklich Blume um Blume probt, und doch nicht weiss was aus dem Ganzen wird' (*Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke*, Leipzig, 1899, p. 9).

³ Cf. C. S. Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic*, p. 268: 'Such singleness as the middle age cultivated in romance must be sought in the parts considered as separate stories, and will be found oftener in the shorter romances that remained by themselves.'

modern replica of the medieval prose cycles¹—did not themselves become novels in the modern sense of the term, but produced, by a process of differentiation, short prose works, each centring on a particular theme or episode.² The fact that Malory anticipated this development ensured the survival of his rendering of Arthurian romances, just as the inability of French writers to turn the Cycle into a series of *nouvelles* was one of the causes of its eclipse in France. 'Au XV^e siècle', writes Paul Morand, 'avec Sir Thomas Malory, dans la *Morte d'Arthur*, la nouvelle sert à traduire, sous une forme portative, ces traditions celtiques et chevaleresques dont l'influence devait être si grande sur Tennyson et les Préraphaélites.'³ Barring the erroneous and somewhat contradictory reference to 'Celtic chivalric traditions', this remark aptly sums up Malory's position, much more accurately, it may be said, than does Professor E. A. Baker's elaborate account of the 'growth of Arthurian romance, from its hazy beginnings in myth and folk-lore to its embodiment in a single orderly narrative by Malory'.⁴ Like Thomas Nash in his *Unfortunate Traveller*,⁵ Malory gives us mere *disjectae membra novellae*, and for this very reason stands in a direct line of descent from the 'cyclic' technique of his medieval predecessors to the individualized *nouvelle*—the real, if unacknowledged, starting-point of modern fiction.

¹ Hence their inordinate size and the absence of proper endings. 'Le roman s'est donné pour loi, pendant tout le XVII^e siècle et une partie du XVIII^e, de n'avoir aucune loi de composition. . . . C'est pour cela que les romans paraissent en six, dix, douze volumes, dont la publication s'espace sur un certain nombre d'années et parfois (comme pour *l'Astrée*, la *Marianne* de Marivaux, etc.) ne s'achève pas. Personne n'est pressé de connaître la fin, puisqu'il n'y a pas de fin' (Daniel Mornet, *Histoire de la clarté française*, p. 135).

² Perhaps the most famous example is *Manon Lescaut*, originally the seventh volume of Prévost's *Mémoires et Aventures d'un homme de qualité*.

³ *L'Heure qu'il est*, Paris, 1938, p. 211.

⁴ *The History of the English Novel*, vol. 1, p. 304.

⁵ Cf. J. J. Jusserand, *Le Roman au temps de Shakespeare* (Paris, 1887), pp. 123-4: 'Il a le défaut de tous les romans du temps, aussi bien en Angleterre qu'ailleurs: il est incohérent et mal composé. Mais il présente des fragments excellents, deux ou trois bons portraits d'individus bien observés et quelques scènes, comme la vengeance de Cutwolfe, solidement construites, qui permettent de prévoir qu'un jour la puissance dramatique du génie anglais, exténuée sans doute par une longue carrière sur le théâtre, pourra, au lieu de s'éteindre, revivre dans le roman.'

3. Interpretation

'Make use of the emotions. Relate the familiar manifestations of them.
... These details carry conviction.' Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, iii. 16.

It is a commonplace of literary history to describe medieval romance as the prototype of the modern novel. Courtly romance writers, we are told, introduced into the realm of fiction the analysis of the mental reactions of the characters to the story and by so doing laid the foundations of the story of 'character and motive'. 'There is little incident', writes W. P. Ker, 'sensibility has its own way, in monologues by the actors and digressions by the author on the nature of love. It is rather the sentiment than the passions that is here expressed in the "language of the heart", but however that may be, there are both delicacy and eloquence in the language. The pensive Fénice who debates with herself for nearly two hundred lines in one place (Chrestien de Troyes' *Cligès*, 4410-4574) is the ancestress of many late heroines.'¹ Gaston Paris states the case less enthusiastically but no less strongly. Referring to the immediate successors of Chrestien de Troyes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries he remarks: 'L'analyse psychologique parfois très fine à laquelle, d'après l'exemple de Chrétien, ils soumettent les sentiments et surtout les conflits de sentiments de leurs personnages, ils l'expriment dans des monologues, souvent d'une subtilité fatigante, d'une forme recherchée et d'une fastidieuse longueur, mais qui souvent aussi joignent à une certaine profondeur une vraie naïveté. Par là ces romans sont les véritables précurseurs du roman moderne.'² And a more recent critic, Alfons Hilka, asserts with equal conviction that Chrestien's method of characterization through reflective monologues is identical with that used in the modern novel.³

¹ *Epic and Romance*, p. 358.

² *Histoire littéraire de la France*, t. xxx, p. 16.

³ Cf. *Die direkte Rede als stilistisches Kunstmittel in den Romanen des Kristian von Troyes* (Halle, 1903), p. 64: 'Im Volksepos bestehen sie (die Reflexionen) in der kurzen Andeutung der Gedanken der vor einem schnellen Entschlusse stehenden Person, so recht passend zur reflexionslosen Plastik des alten Liederstils; bei Kristian aber haben wir lang fortgesponnene, in spitzfindigen Betrachtungen des eigenen Ich sich gefallende und zugleich kunstvoll durchgebildete, nicht selten sogar dramatisch gestaltete Monologe. Bei ihm sind die Monologe immer ein beliebtes

If there is any truth in these statements, two cardinal questions come to mind: how did the poets of the courtly school, with no background of narrative literature other than the epic, come so near the modern conception of the novel? And if the similarity is no mere accident, if one *genre* is descended from the other, what were the stages of its descent? Neither question can be answered here fully; but as Malory's contribution to the 'story of character and motive' can only be seen against the background of these wider issues, it seems necessary to give some account of them, even at the risk of a digression *ad aliud extra materiam*.

(a) *The origins of 'sentiment'*

Perhaps the most obvious difference between Old French epic and romance is that the latter, not content to *narrate* events, endeavours to *interpret* them.¹ That this procedure should have been adopted in what was essentially a 'learned' type of work—and French courtly romance was primarily *un genre savant*—is not in itself unnatural, but what made it inevitable was the peculiar intellectual background of courtly poets.² The search for the unexpressed meaning was perhaps the principal feature of twelfth-century thought, almost equally noticeable in all spheres of learning. It may have been considered by some a waste of time to indulge in such subtleties as the attempt to find in the statement that Hyllus was the son of Hercules the inner meaning that a valid argument comes from a bold and vigorous disputant, or

Kunstmittel, um uns neben seinen subjektiven (oft gleichfalls sehr ausgedehnten) Reflexionen einen Einblick in das Innere seiner Personen zu geben, die selbst ihre innersten Gedanken zergliedern und sich von ihrem qualenden Zustande voll auf- und abwogender Gedanken Rechnung ablegen, gerade wie dies in den modernen Romanen geschieht.'

¹ Cf. Joseph Bédier, *Les Légendes épiques*, t. iii, p. 418: 'Un romancier a le droit d'intervenir pour expliquer ses intentions. Homère, Virgile interviennent sans cesse; non pas Turold. Son art, sobre, elliptique, s'interdit toute glose.'

² The theory which holds the field at present is that the 'explanatory' lyrical monologue came from Ovid. Suggested by Gaston Paris (*Journal des Savants*, 1902) and adopted by A. Hilka (op. cit., pp. 62 and 71 ff.), this view has been substantiated with reference to the *Enéas* by M. Edmond Faral (*Recherches sur les sources latines des contes et romans courtois du moyen âge*, pp. 150-4). The influence of Ovid is undeniable, but it does not suffice to account for the complex processes involved in the technique of courtly narrative. What follows is but a brief summary of some of the salient points which have not so far received enough attention and with which I hope to deal more fully in a forthcoming study.

in the five vowels the five pleas of the crown, the names of which happened each to have a different vowel in the second syllable;¹ interpretation remained none the less the most widely recognized intellectual pursuit. Excellent practice in it was provided by *grammatica*, the first member of the Trivium, which had pride of place in the schools of Gaul from the seventh century to the eleventh and reigned supreme in the heyday of the school of Chartres, from 1050 to 1150. According to the definition given in the fourth century by Donatus (*scientia interpretandi poetas atque historicos et recte scribendi loquendique ratio*), repeated almost word for word in the ninth century by Rabanus,² and amplified by John of Salisbury in the twelfth, *grammatica* was primarily concerned with the elucidation of ancient authors; the proper use of language, both spoken and written, was a means to this end. John of Salisbury's famous chapter *De usu legendi et prelegendi* shows how the subject was taught at Chartres. Pupils were encouraged above all to develop and perfect the crude substance (*rudem materiam*) of a story or an argument 'with such abundance of learning and such elegance of composition and ornament that the work, brought to the highest perfection, seemed as it were the image of all arts'.³ The practice of *grammatica*, *dulcis secretorum comes*, thus instilled in the pupils' minds what few, if any, French epic poets possessed: the habit of expounding and elaborating a narrative or a discourse, of bringing out its significance, and so giving it new weight and attraction.⁴ This was at first a habit of mind; but it soon became a habit of conception, equally prominent in religious and secular writings. The

¹ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. C. C. J. Webb, 829 a (p. 10): 'Ylum esse ab Hercule, ualidum scilicet argumentum a forti et robusto argumentatore, potestates uocalium quinque iura regnorum, et in hunc modum docere omnia, studium illius etatis erat.'

² *De Clericorum Institutione*, III. xviii, in Migne, *Patrologia latina*, vol. cvii, col. 395 b.

³ *Metalogicon*, ed. C. C. J. Webb, 854 a-b, p. 54: 'Illi enim per diacrisim, quam nos illustrationem siue picturationem possumus appellare, cum rudem materiam historie aut argumenti aut fabule aliamue quamlibet suscepissent, eam tanta disciplinarum copia et tanta compositionis et condimenti gratia excolebant, ut opus consummatum omnium artium quodammodo uideretur imago.'

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 856 d, pp. 58-9: 'Ne quis tamquam parua fastidiat grammatices elementa; non quia magne sit opere discernere a uocalibus consonantes, easque ipsas in semiuocalium numerum mutarumque partiri, sed quia interiora uelut sacri huius

'otherworldliness' of medieval preaching was not an attitude of indifference to physical facts, but a call to see through them: in St. Bernard's words, to conceive of the visible world as 'full of supernal mysteries, abounding each in its special sweetness, if the eye that beholds be but attentive';¹ and in the opening lines of the twelfth-century *Livres des Rois* the promise of a similar benefit was held out to readers of any 'simple' story:

Servants of God, listen to the story: it is very simple and seems unadorned, but it is full of meaning (*sens*) and matter. The story is chaff, the meaning wheat; the meaning is the fruit, the story the branch. This book is as a chest in which are locked the hidden things of God.²

Applied to narrative poetry, this attitude of mind produced at first a strangely inflated form of explanatory digression such as is found in the early *romans d'antiquité*: Ovid's story of Pyramus and Thisbe became in its twelfth-century French adaptation a series of redundant soliloquies; and in the French *Roman de Troie* Achilles, the silent lover of Polyxena, was made to describe at unnecessarily great length the devastating effects of his passion.³ But less than two decades later, in the romances of Chrestien de Troyes, the same method led to some truly remarkable results: in recording their reactions to each important turn of events the characters of Chrestien's stories were able to display a subtlety of thought and feeling far beyond any earlier attempts at characterization. The 'hidden things', once skilfully revealed, ceased to be a mere subject of school exercises; they became a vital element of a new form of narrative art.

But it is doubtful whether the literary *genre* thus created would have prospered as it did if it had not inherited at an

aduentibus apparebit rerum multa subtilitas, que non modo acuerie ingenia puerilia sed exercere altissimam quoque eruditionem ac scientiam possit.'

¹ *De Laudibus Virginis Matris*, in Migne, *Patrologia latina*, vol. clxxxiii, col. 56.

² 'Fedeil deu, entend l'estorie: asez est clere e semble nue, mais pleine est de sens et de meule. L'estorie est paille, le sen est grains; le sen est fruit, l'estorie raims. Cist livres est cum armarie des secreiz Deu' (*Livre des Rois*, ed. Curtius, p. 5). Cf. Professor W. A. Nitze's comment on this passage in his article on 'Sens et Matière', *Romania*, xliv, pp. 25-6.

³ *Le Roman de Troie par Benoît de Sainte Maure*, ed. L. Constans, vol. iii, pp. 151 ff., ll. 17638-746.

early stage another feature of contemporary learning. If *grammatica* can be said to have shown how a given set of incidents could be explained and expanded, *rhetorica*, the second part of the Trivium, taught poets and story-tellers the proper use of imagination. The discipline which in the later Middle Ages was to be largely reduced to mere stylistic ornamentation¹ had not at that time lost its original composing function. In a number of important works embodying the doctrine of the rhetoricians from Quintilian onwards the term *colores rhetoricae* refers, as in Cicero, not so much to formal elaboration as to the 'treatment of the matter' from the speaker's or the writer's point of view. There is a significant agreement in this respect between Quintilian and the three great medieval scholars closely connected with the Gallic tradition of rhetoric: Sidonius Apollinaris, Martianus Capella, and John of Salisbury. Sidonius Apollinaris insists on the use of 'colours' because they 'provide boys' themes with pieces to weave in' and enable the orator to display his talent despite the meagreness of his case.² Martianus Capella in his allegorical description of the seven arts speaks of rhetoric as *rerum omnium regina* who has shown 'the power to move men whither she pleases, or whence, to bow them to tears, to incite them to rage, to transform the mien and feeling'.³ And John of Salisbury goes so far as to attribute to rhetoric the function normally assumed by *dialectica*: he uses the term *probandi colores* in the sense of 'amplification of proof', and looks to rhetoric not only for brilliance of style but for means of persuasion.⁴

¹ Cf. Brunetto Latini, *Tresor*, ed. Chabaille, p. 486: 'Tout ce que l'om porroit en iii moz ou a moult po de paroles dire il (*le aornement*) les acroist par autres paroles plus longues et plus avenans qui dient ce meisme.' For less humorous definitions of rhetorical amplification see *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, iv. 28, and Edmond Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du XII^e et du XIII^e siècle*, pp. 61-85 et *passim*.

² 'Sic adulescentum declamatiunculas pannis textilibus comparantes intellegebant eloquia iuvenum laboriosius brevia produci quam porrecta succidi' (ed. Mohr, i. iv. 3). 'Sic et magnus orator, si negotium aggrediatur angustum, tunc amplum plausibilius manifestat ingenium' (ibid. viii. x. 3).

³ 'Nam ueluti potens rerum omnium regina et impellere quo uellet et unde uellet deducere, et in lacrimas flectere et in rabiem concitare, et in alios etiam uultus sensusque conuertere tam urbes quam exercitus proeliantes, quaecumque poterat agmina populorum' (*De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, ed. Dick, v. 426-7).

⁴ 'Siquidem Grammatica Poeticaque se totas infundunt, et eius quod exponitur totam superficiem occupant. Huic, ut dici solet, campo Logica, probandi colores

In their school practices prospective romance writers could learn how to apply these precepts. First they were shown how to paraphrase some speeches in the *Aeneid* (*loci Vergiliani*); next came the *dictiones ethicae*, or soliloquies with which persons in history or mythology could be credited on certain occasions.¹ The third and most advanced stage of rhetorical training was reached in the *controversiae*, or disquisitions on general subjects, of which there are many striking examples in the letters of Sidonius Apollinaris.² All this was, of course, originally intended for use in discourses, not in works of fiction, but the common confusion between the notion of *narratio* ('statement of facts in a discourse') and 'narrative',³ which can be traced as far back as Quintilian, helped to transfer to imaginative literature what was in reality a method of declamation, and the process was further facilitated by the fact that, as some passages in Sidonius clearly suggest, *declamatio* was itself treated as a literary form alongside with the *epos tragoediarum*, the *comoedia*, and the *satira*.⁴ Nothing seems more natural, therefore, than that rhetorical devices should have been used for purposes of original composition. And so, after having been trained by the grammarians to react in an articulate manner to works of Latin antiquity, romance writers were able to discover from the rhetoricians a still more vital principle of the art they were to practise: the habit of expressing through a *fabula* or a *historia* a point of view of their own.

This habit soon became the very essence of courtly

afferens, suas immittit rationes in fulgore auri; et Rethorica in locis persuasionum et nitore eloquii candorem argenteum emulatur' (*Metalogicon*, ed. C. C. J. Webb, 854 b, p. 54).

¹ e.g. Juno's words when she saw Antaeus matched with Hercules or Thetis before the body of Achilles. Ennodius (*Dictiones* xxvii) gives as examples of this type of exercise *Verba Didonis cum abeuntem videret Aeneam*, *Verba Menelai cum Troiam videret inustam*, etc. A similar purpose was served by *sermocinatio*, one of the nineteen *colores sententiarum*, which is given considerable prominence by Geoffroi de Vinsauf in his *Poetria Nova* (1210), ll. 1265-6 and 1305-24.

² See also Ennodius, op. cit., xx.

³ Johannes de Garlandia places *fabula* and *historia* among the kinds of *narratio* 'remote from legal pleading' (ed. G. Mari, *Romanische Forschungen* xiii, p. 926).

⁴ Et nunc inflat epos tragoediarum,
Nunc comoedia temperat iocosa,
Nunc flammant satirae et tyrannicarum
Declamatio controversiarum (VII. xi. 3).

romance. Whatever the subject of the narrative, its primary function as conceived by twelfth- and thirteenth-century poets was to serve as an expression of the thoughts and emotions inspired by courtly idealism, to translate in terms of actions and characters the subtle varieties of courtly sentiment and the highly sophisticated code of courtly behaviour. A romance might recall the legendary exploits of King Arthur's knights, or some imaginary event at the court of Byzantium, or again some episode placed in a contemporary French setting; what it primarily endeavoured to do was not to give an impression of life in the lands and the times to which its subject-matter ostensibly belonged, but to use this subject-matter as a means of conveying a new philosophy. Hence its inherent duality and the marked opposition of thought and matter so clearly expressed in the opening passage of Chrestien's *Conte de la Charrete*:

Matiere et san l'an done et livre
La contesse, et il s'antremet
De panser si que rien n'i met
Fors sa painne et s'antancion.¹

With a modesty characteristic of contemporary etiquette Chrestien here credits his patroness, Marie de Champagne, with both the matter (*matiere*) and the spirit (*sen*) of the work. *Matiere* and *sen* are to him the two distinct constituent elements of courtly fiction. *Sen* is no longer used in the sense in which it is found in the extract from the *Livres des Rois* quoted above: it is not 'meaning' or *signification*, but the 'theme', or 'purpose', or 'intention' of the work;² not part of a given matter, or a sense inherent in the story, but an idea brought in as it were from outside and expressed through the story, or the way in which the story has been

¹ 'The countess having given him (= the poet) both the matter and the spirit [of the work], he undertakes to proceed with it adding nothing but his own labour and exertion.'

² *Grundidee*, according to the editor of the text, W. Foerster; *la nature de la thèse*, according to M. Gustave Cohen: 'la thèse qui consacre le pouvoir absolu, despotique, tyrannique de la dame sur l'amant' (*Chrétien de Troyes, sa vie et son œuvre*, pp. 226 and 276). In the Prologue to her *Lais* Marie de France says that 'it was the custom of the ancients to speak obscurely so that those who came after them and were to study them might construe their writing (*gloser la letre*) and add to it as they thought fit (*de lur sen le surplus metre*)'. The two processes correspond to the two varieties of *sen* noted above: the meaning implicit in the matter, and such fresh meaning or thoughts as may be added to it by the author or the *remanieur*.

remodelled by the poet to suit his purpose. Just as the colours of rhetoric were a means of developing and conveying the orator's conception of a case,¹ so *sen* stands here for the intellectual, emotional, and sometimes material content added by the author in accordance with his own interpretation of the original matter.

This conception of narrative had a far-reaching effect on its evolution. Superimposed as it was on the *matiere*, the *sen* was naturally regarded as something extraneous to it and therefore easily replaceable. A further consequence was this typical medieval phenomenon: the frequent recurrence of the same narrative theme with varying and sometimes conflicting 'colours' supplied by individual *remanieurs*. There is in the French twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries romances a striking contrast between the continuity in the transmission of the *matiere* and the corresponding degree of instability in the position of the *sen*. Lancelot's sacrifice of his knightly honour in the attempt to save Guinevere from captivity, as described in Chrestien's *Conte de la Charrete*, has a clear and unequivocal motivation: the service of love must come before all else. When Lancelot has to choose between being driven in a cart like a convict and failing to rescue his lady, he does not hesitate for more than 'two steps'; but even this momentary hesitation is enough to arouse Guinevere's anger: after rescuing her from Meleagant, Lancelot finds himself rebuked by her in spite of all the humiliations and trials he has faced for her sake, and his grief is the greater because for a long time he does not know, and cannot even guess, the cause of her displeasure. It was only natural that Chrestien's successors should have found this somewhat far-fetched; but while they objected to Chrestien's highly artificial *sen*, they found his *matiere* attractive enough to be used again. And so in the next version of the story—the thirteenth-century prose *Lancelot*—the *matiere* was reproduced and expanded, while the *sen* was altered beyond recognition. The Guinevere of the

¹ Gaston Boissier defines them as 'la façon dont l'orateur comprend la cause qu'il va plaider et le tour qu'il lui donne, sa manière de présenter les événements, l'attitude qu'il attribue aux personnages' ('Les Écoles de déclamation à Rome', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1902, t. xi, p. 491).

prose romance still rebukes Lancelot: this is part of the *matiere*. But she rebukes him for a very different reason. She is no longer the haughty lady of Chrestien's story with a logic that makes her actions seem unreal. Instead of blaming Lancelot for his would-be offence against the courtly code, she sends him away because she thinks that she has reason to be jealous. The readers of the prose romance no doubt preferred this simple motive to the one which had prompted Guinevere's action in Chrestien; but judged impartially, it does not blend with the narrative any more effectively than did the original theme. In nearly every important instance the same essential weakness can be observed: the *sen*, this cherished product of learning, appears as a superstructure, often attractive and significant in itself, but invariably detachable from its foundation.

If, in spite of this, courtly poetry, through its survivals and adaptations, became the ancestor of the psychological novel, it was because the cardinal elements of psychological fiction were there, even though they were lacking in cohesion and unity of purpose, as were the non-harmonized voices before the discovery of plural melody; and perhaps the main importance of Malory's work lies in the fact that it is an example of their gradual harmonization. It was in writing his two longest romances—the *Tristram* and the *Grail*—that he discovered and learned the medieval art of reinterpretation and began to discover his own way of blending matter and sentiment; and it was in his last two works—the *Book of Launcelot and Guinevere* and the *Morte Arthur*—that he was able to make the component elements of early fiction into an organic whole. This was not only, as Saintsbury and other historians of the novel have described it, a transition 'from the story of incident to the story of character and motive'; it was a new and significant attempt to overcome an aesthetic anomaly inherent in the very foundations of medieval romance. All that made it possible is part of a process which is well worth our understanding, for it affects the whole development of imaginative literature. In these pages we can do little more than notice its bare outline, and that only so far as it is visible in Malory's great books of *Tristram*, of the *Grail*, of *Lancelot*, and of *Arthur*.

(b) *Experiments in the use of 'sen'*

Caxton's remark that Malory took his 'copy' out of 'certain books of French' and 'reduced it into English' is a paraphrase of two passages from Malory's book, neither of which was intended to refer to the entire collection of his romances. At the end of the *Book of Sir Tristram* Malory says that it was 'drawyn oute of Freynshe'; and he concludes the *Tale of the Sankgreal* by the words 'Thus endith the Tale of the Sankgreal that was breffly drawy[n] oute of Freynshe'.¹ The fact that the author himself only uses the phrase 'drawn out of French' in reference to these two works is no mere accident: none of his other compositions is as fully accounted for by its sources, and none can provide a better illustration of the twofold principle of condensed translation.² This is not to say that in 'reducing' his *Tristram* and his *Tale of the Sankgreal* from the French Malory abandons the narrative technique which he evolved in his earlier works; if anything, he uses more consistently, and on a larger scale, the devices which he had occasion to practise before, such as the telescoping of scenes and characters, the unravelling of interwoven motifs, and the division of large compositions into smaller narrative units. But on the whole he seems to be more inclined than ever before—with the possible exception of the *Tale of Arthur and Lucius*—to treat his sources as material for translation. His additions are timid in character and few in number. Never in the whole of the *Book of Tristram* or, for that matter, in the *Tale of the Sankgreal* does he use his inventive powers as freely as he did at the end of the *Tale of King Arthur*; nor does he ever select his material with as little respect for the original as he showed in the *Tale of Sir Launcelot*. Patiently and consistently he 'draws briefly' upon the French prose *Tristan* and the *Queste del Saint Graal*. Scott's remark that 'the collection called the *Morte Arthur*' was 'extracted at hazard, and without much art or combination, from the

¹ See facsimile facing p. xxx. Caxton adds in each case: *in to Englysshe*.

² Caxton's 'to reduce' is obviously a synonym of Malory's 'to draw briefly', and this alone should suffice to dispose of E. Brugger's suggestion that the former must be taken to mean, in Caxton's context, 'to bring into another language without any idea of shortening' (*Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, vol. li, pp. 133-69).

various French prose folios',¹ is as true of these two works as it is inapplicable to the others.

But while doing a translator's work, Malory had neither the attitude of mind nor the temperament of a translator. However slight his alterations and additions may appear compared to the bulk of the narrative, they are enough to show that he read his sources with the inquisitiveness of an artist, and that in the process of 'reducing' them he was not merely observing their manner: he was gradually and consistently fashioning his own.

One peculiarity of the French *Tristan* and of the *Queste* seems to have made a particularly strong and lasting impression on his mind. Practically the whole of the *Queste* was a series of seemingly simple incidents which served as illustrations of a theological doctrine, and most such incidents were followed, with remarkable regularity, by a discussion of their significance. The prose *Tristan* was less consistent and correspondingly less monotonous. Its author was on the whole more concerned with the stories he had to tell than with any significance they might possess. But he could neither ignore nor indeed escape the tradition which lay immediately behind his work, the tradition of courtly romance with its characteristic use of direct speech and digression as a means of organizing and elucidating the narrative matter. And so the vast store of material which Malory found in the principal branches of the Arthurian Cycle and in the prose *Tristan* brought him face to face with the main issue of narrative art: the relation between matter and meaning. In reading the French *Tristan* and the *Queste* he realized—perhaps for the first time—that a story was incomplete without some account of its human motives or some emotional content; he also realized that neither the 'glosses' nor the themes contained in those two works were necessarily the most appropriate or the most acceptable that could be found. When his English predecessors—the poets who wrote *Ywain and Gawain* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—were faced with similar difficulties they generally took the line of least resistance and dismissed the comments which they thought unsuitable without replacing them by their

¹ Introduction to *Sir Tristrem*, 4th edition, Edinburgh, 1819, p. lxxxi.

own.¹ They were, as W. P. Ker rightly remarks, 'plainly unable to follow the French in all the effusive passages'.² Malory must have experienced the same difficulty. But what he disagreed with was not the 'effusiveness' of the French romances, nor indeed their insistence on sentiment; his quarrel was with the content and orientation of some of the 'effusive passages' and with the treatment of some of the traditional romantic themes. And so he proceeded, at first very tentatively, but in the end with a genuine sense of purpose, to remodel their *sen* and amend what Villon would have called their *mesfait*. The most striking example of his endeavour to reinterpret the story of Tristan and Iseult is his account of how their love began. It will be remembered that in the earliest version of the legend the lovers were the victims of a magic potion which they drank by mistake on their journey from Ireland to Cornwall, where Iseult was to marry King Mark.³ A later and more rationalistically minded poet, Thomas, seeking to avoid this purely supernatural explanation, added a new beginning: once, while Tristan was still at the court of the King of Ireland, 'Iseult beheld him with enamoured eyes'; and, in the words of Thomas's German *remanieur*, Gottfried von Strassburg, 'everything

¹ The following parallel is an instance in point:

Chrestien's *Yvain*
(2639-50)

Ywain and Gawain
(1551 ff.)

Mes sire Yvains mout a anviz
S'est de la dame departiz
Einsi, que li cuers ne s'an muet.
Li rois le cors mener an puet,
Mes del cuer n'an manra il point;
Car si se tient et si se joint
Au cuer celi, qui se remaint,
Qu'il n'a pooir, que il l'an maint.
Des que li cors est sanz le cuer,
Donc ne puet il vivre a nul fuer;
Et se li cors sanz le cuer vit,
Tel mervoille nus hon ne vit.

No lenger wald syr
Ywayne byde,
On his stede sone gan
he stride,
And þus he has his
leue tane.

² *English Literature: Mediaeval* (Home University Library), p. 108.

³ When the hermit urges the lovers to repent Tristan says:

'Sire, par foi,
Que ele m'aime en bone foi,
Vos n'entendez pas la raison:
Q'el m'aime, c'est par la poison.
Ge ne me pus de lié partir,
N'ele de moi, n'en quier mentir' (Béroul, *Tristan*, ll. 1381-6).

about him pleased her well, and she approved of him in her heart'.¹

The author of the French prose romance of Tristan knew both these versions, but adopted neither. In order to account for the love motif he resorted to an expedient which was in keeping with the 'adventurous' spirit of his work, but singularly incongruous in the context of a Tristan romance: as Tristan was about to take part in the tournament of the *Château de la Lande* he realized, according to the prose writer, that another knight, Palomides (*Palamedes*), was in love with Iseult. Out of sheer love of rivalry he promptly decided to become Iseult's knight.² The same story reappears in Malory who knew no other version of it, but with a curious difference: Tristram's rivalry with Palomides, instead of being the motive which prompts Tristram's decision, becomes a mere consequence of his love for Iseult. In a passage which *precedes* the description of the tournament Malory remarks that Tristram 'cast great love to La Beale Isode',

for she was at that tyme the fayrest lady and maydyn of the worlde. And there Tramtryste lerned hir to harpe, and she began to have a grete fantasy unto hym.³

It is not until the next paragraph that we are told how Palomides 'drew unto La Beale Isode and proffered her many gifts', and how Tristram 'espied' him:

And wete you well sir Tramtryste had grete despyte at sir Palomydes, for La Beale Isode tolde Tramtryste that Palomydes was in wyll to

¹ '... geviel ir allez an im wol und lobte ez in ir muote' (Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, ed. R. Bechstein, II. 10006-7). The Norse Saga (*Tristrams Saga ok Isondar*, ed. E. Kölbing) describes the scene in similar terms: 'leit hun pá á hit fríða andlit hans með ástsamligum augum' (ch. xliii). Thomas's own rendering of this scene is not extant, but it can be reconstructed with tolerable certainty from these two adaptations.

² 'Tant regarde Palamedes Yseult que Tristan s'en aperchoit a son semblant qu'il l'ayme de tout son cuer. Tristan si l'avoit par maintes fois regardee, maiz ce n'estoit pas pour amour qu'il y eust. Et puis qu'il vist que Palomedes la regardoit si merueilleusement, il dit qu'il l'avra ou qu'il mourra, ne ja Palamedes pour pouvoir qu'il ait n'y advendra' (MS. B.N. fr. 103, f. 39^r, col. 1). Paraphrasing this passage, E. Löseth (*Le Roman en prose de Tristan, analyse critique d'après les manuscrits de Paris*, p. 22) writes: 'Tristan, qui jusque-là n'avait guère éprouvé de sentiments pour elle, s'éprend sérieusement en voyant l'amour de Palamède.'

³ *Infra*, p. 385.

be crystynde for hir sake. Thus was there grete envy betwyxe Tramtryste and sir Palomydes.

In this way the normal sequence of incidents is re-established and the true 'colour' restored. The love motif, instead of being a mere adjunct to chivalric contests, becomes once more the dominating theme. Nor is this the only instance of Malory's preference for emotional motivation. The first parting of the lovers,¹ Tristram's madness, his life in the wilderness,² his recognition by Isode in the garden of Tintagel, when she begs him to leave her and 'grant King Mark his will' in order to save his own life,³ all these and other similar episodes acquire in Malory's rendering a new significance. They are among his finest contributions to the otherwise uninspired matter of his *Book of Sir Tristram*, and they do much to relieve its tedium.⁴

But perhaps the type of 'colour' that Malory uses most effectively is the half-humorous dialogue—his favourite form of narrative ornamentation. Its purpose is the same as that of a digression or a monologue, namely to give the narrative some human interest. Here is one example out of many. Tristram tells Isode that they must both attend a

¹ *Infra*, p. 392.

² *Infra*, p. 496: 'So thys lady and damesell brought hym mete and drynke, but he ete lityll thereoff. Than uppon a nyght he put hys horse frome hym and unlaced hys armour, and so yeode unto the wyldirnes and braste downe the treys and bowis. And othirwhyle, whan he founde the harpe that the lady sente hym, than wolde he harpe and play thereuppon and wepe togydirs. And somtyme, whan he was in the wood, the lady wust nat where he was. Than wolde she sette hir downe and play uppon the harpe, and anone sir Trystramys wolde com to the harpe and harkyn thereto, and somtyme he wolde harpe hymself. Thus he there endured a quarter off a yere, and so at the laste he ran hys way and she wust nat where he was becom.' Cf. *Commentary*, note 495-501.

³ *Infra*, p. 502. Isode ends by saying 'And ever whan I may I shall sende unto you, and whan ye lyst ye may com unto me, and at all tymes early and late I woll be at youre commaundement, to lyve as poore a lyff as ever ded quene or lady'.

⁴ It is of course possible to set against these passages a number of equally 'effusive' ones which Malory has mercilessly cut out. In describing the days when the lovers were free from suspicion and restraint the French prose-writer says: 'oncques mes ne furent tant aise com si sont orendroit, car, quant il vont ore recordant les maux et les paines que chascun a souffert endroit soi, et il se voient ensemble, que il poent fere toute lor volenté, il dient que il fussent buer nes s'il peussent toz jor mes vivre et mener tel joie et tel feste.' Malory writes instead: 'Than sir Trystram used dayly and nyghtly to go to quene Isode whan he myght.' But this only goes to show that while adopting the French author's method Malory used it in his own way and for his own purposes. For further examples see *Commentary*, notes 592-4-14 and 779-16-18.

gathering at Arthur's court 'at Pentecost nexte folowyng'. "Sir", seyde dame Isode, "and hyt please you, I woll nat be there, for thorow me ye bene marked of many good knyghtes, and that causyth you for to have much more labour for my sake than nedyth you to have"—a surprising thought for a courtly lady: instead of encouraging her knight to perform feats of prowess on her behalf she seems to object to any excess of 'labour for her sake'; she is clearly more concerned about Tristram's safety than about his fighting record. But she is by no means indifferent to his reputation, and when Tristram refuses to go without her ('Than woll I nat be there but yf ye be there') she urges him to do his social duty:

'God deffende', seyde La Beall Isode, 'for than shall I be spokyn of shame amonge all quenys and ladyes of astate; for ye that ar called one of the nobelyste knyghtys of the worlde and a knyght of the Rounde Table, how may ye be myssed at the feste? For what shall be sayde of you amonge all knyghtes? "A! se how sir Trystram huntyth and hawkyth, and cowryth within a castell wyth hys lady, and forsakyth us. Alas!" shall som sey, "hyt ys pyté that ever he was knyght, or ever he shulde have the love of a lady." Also, what shall quenys and ladyes say of me? "Hyт ys pyté that I have my lyff, that I wolde holde so noble a knyght as ye ar frome hys worshyp."

'So God me helpe', seyde sir Trystram unto La Beall Isode, 'hyt ys passyngly well seyde of you and nobely counceyled. And now I well undirstonde that ye love me.'¹

Chrestien de Troyes uses a very similar 'colour' in his *Erec et Enide*² to motivate the subsequent adventures of his hero. Here it has no such purpose. The dialogue is designed merely to throw some light on Isode's character. She is neither the 'Iseut douloureuse et forte' of the old poems, nor the sophisticated courtly queen of the French prose romance, but an affectionate and ingenious *amie*, devoted enough to put Tristram's comfort and safety before excessive bravery, and yet thoughtful enough to protect his and her good name. It is she who begs Tristram, on another

¹ *Infra*, pp. 839-40.

² Cf. lines 2561-5:
 Blasmee an sui, ce poise moi,
 Et dient tuit reison por quoi,
 Que si vos ai lacié et pris
 Que tot an perdez vostre pris,
 Ne ne querez a el antandre.

occasion, to carry arms when he goes hunting in the forest, a precaution which in the French romance he takes of his own accord.¹ Such details are few and far between; but they suggest important possibilities.

As for the *Book of Sir Tristram* as a whole, it remains true that in reinterpreting the story in his own way, as each medieval writer had done before him, Malory failed to give it a meaning, a *sen*, capable of supporting its complex and delicate narrative frame. He failed above all to grasp and bring out the tragic theme, essential to any coherent form of the Tristan legend and still discernible in its prose version.² Mark is Tristan's overlord whom he respects, as he respects the bond of feudal service. 'Il ne conteste pas', writes Joseph Bédier, 'la loi de l'honneur vassalique, il la viole et, la violant, il souffre.' Without this notion of an involuntary breach of a sacred tie the traditional *données* of the legend cannot survive. Already in the French prose romance an important change takes place: love, instead of being the cause of an insoluble conflict, becomes the sacred obligation of a knight-errant; from being *un pechié* (the word in Old French characteristically combines the meanings of 'sin' and 'misfortune') it becomes a virtue, and the story of Tristan and Iseult degenerates into a much protracted heroic comedy, in which the heroes successfully outwit the villains. Mark, instead of being an intensely human and almost likeable character, turns into a traitor, and the whole moral weight of Arthurian knighthood is thrown against him. In opposing him Tristan violates no sacred trust; he merely upholds his own honour and the rights of 'true love'. In all this Malory whole-heartedly follows his source; it is with genuine delight that he relates the blissful retirement of the lovers to Joyous Gard and leaves them there at the close of the romance so that, in his favourite phrase, they may live 'cheerfully' for ever after. The happy ending is achieved here as in the *Tale of King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius* by the omission of

¹ Cf. *infra*, p. 757, and MS. B.N. fr. 99, f. 409^r, col. 1.

² Cf. the remarks on the love potion (MS. B.N. fr. 103, f. 56^v, col. 1): 'Yseut boit. Ha! Dieu! Quel boire! Or sont entrez en la rote qui ja mais ne leur fauldra jour de leur vies, car ilz ont beü leur destruction et leur mort. Cil boire leur a semblé bon et moult doulz, mais oncques doulceur ne fu si chier acheteé comment ceste sera.'

the concluding portion of the original: 'Here endyth the secunde boke off Syr Trystram de Lyones whyche drawyn was oute of Freynshe by Sir Thomas Malleorre, knyght, as Jesu be hys helpe. Amen. But here ys no rehersall of the thirde booke.' The 'thirde booke' contained, among other things, the story of the death of the lovers,¹ but Malory prefers to end the work with a picture of their happiness in their peaceful abode: 'And than sir Trystram returned unto Joyous Garde, and sir Palomydes folowed after the ques-tynge beste.' In all essentials, then, Malory's *Tristram* is but another example of a medieval romance in which the author's *sen* fails to harmonize with the *matiere*, and the fairest approach to it is to regard it not as an achievement, but as an experiment: as the first and necessarily timid attempt at reinterpreting a traditional narrative.

When, after the *Tristan*, Malory turned to the *Queste del Saint Graal* he found himself more out of his element than ever before. With the *Tristan* he may have occasionally disagreed, but the story was not in itself alien to his tastes and tendencies: it belonged to a world in which he could live and move freely, even though it was not his own. With the *Queste* he entered a totally unfamiliar sphere. It was not merely a work of religious inspiration: it was a dogmatic exposition of a doctrine. In a long series of sermons to which the characters patiently listened in the intervals of their monotonous wanderings, it put forward and illustrated the notion that the coming of the Grail was the final and irrevocable test of good and evil and the triumph of heavenly over earthly chivalry. For this kind of 'interpretation' Malory had little use; but instead of replacing it by his own, he simply 'reduced' all doctrinal comment, shifted the emphasis from theological disquisitions to poetical representation, and so made the Grail quest appear as a mere

¹ That Malory knew this ending is shown by his reference to it in the *Healing of Sir Urre* (p. 1149): 'Also that traytoure kynge slew the noble knyght sir Trystram as he sate harpynge afore hys lady, La Beall Isode, with a trenchaunte glayve, for whos dethe was the moste waylynge of ony knyght that ever was in kynge Arthurs dayes.' This is not, of course, the 'pathetic and imaginative story of the black sail', but a reminiscence of its somewhat crude rendering in the French prose romance. On the prose writer's attitude and method see my *Études sur le Tristan en prose*, pp. 17-20.

pageant of picturesque visions. Such at least is the immediate impression one gets from a comparison of his work with the French *Queste*, and to some readers it may be a relief to find that Malory spares them the unnecessary elaboration of 'symbolic adventures and still more symbolic visions, with a hermit waiting at every road-side to expound the symbolism in the bitterest detail'.¹ 'Do not our hearts,' asks Sir Edmund Chambers, 'in these long books, sometimes go down the hill with Gawain?' There is, perhaps, more to it than that.² It may well be, as Mr. C. S. Lewis has pointed out in a memorable essay,³ that Malory is not simply *for* the Round Table and *against* the Grail, that he has 'a three-storeyed mind—a scale of bad-good-best (Mark—Lancelot—Galahad)'. The fact remains that while he is perfectly serious about the nobility of Lancelot and of Arthurian chivalry, he is simply not concerned with the yet higher law which cuts across the courtly world in the Grail books. In the French *Queste* Lancelot appears as a sinner who has offended God in his earlier life by adopting the standards of *courtoisie*: if he is more favourably treated than some other sinners, it is not because his former life was better than theirs, but because he is willing to repent. He is a clear illustration of a dichotomy of worldly and spiritual, pointing 'from the way of earthly achievement to the way of spiritual illumination'.⁴ With this point of view Malory has little sympathy. He reproduces both the condemnation and the contrition of Lancelot, but sets them against the background of Lancelot's glorious deeds in the days before the Quest, so that his former fame may be constantly borne in mind. When Lancelot is told that he will 'never see of the Sankgreall more than he has seen', his answer is, 'Now I thanke God for Hys grete mercy of that I have sene, for hit suffisith me. For, as I suppose, no man in thys worlde have lyved bettir than I have done to enchyve that I have done.' This does not mean that a triple scale of values is introduced where the

¹ E. K. Chambers, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and Some Collected Essays*, p. 32.

² Possibly more than I imagined when I wrote in my monograph on Malory that 'faced with two main themes and forced to subordinate one, Malory made Corbenic a province of Camelot' (*Malory*, p. 84).

³ Review of *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, etc., in *Medium Aevum*, vol. iii (1934), pp. 238-9.

⁴ E. K. Chambers, *loc. cit.*

French author is using only a double one;¹ it means that if there were a conflict, it would be between 'good' and 'best', not between 'good' and 'bad'. But no such conflict exists in Lancelot's mind. He is not seen in Malory, as he so often is in the French *Queste*, in an attitude of abject humiliation. He knows that his former life was 'good'; and it matters little to him that because it was not 'best' the supreme reward of the Grail is denied him. Hence a significant misrepresentation of the theological issue, and a new treatment of the character of the protagonist. The author of the *Queste*, imbued with Cistercian mysticism, would no doubt have severely censured Malory's frequent confusion of *chevalerie celestienne* with 'virtuous living'² and denounced as sacrilegious the scene in which the sick knight goes on his hands and knees 'so nyghe that he towched the holy vessel and kyst hit'.³ But all this helps to place the action on a human level. While in the French the singing of the birds is but a means of bringing home to Lancelot his sense of wretchedness,⁴ in Malory the same experience 'comforts' him: 'So thus he sorowed tyll hit was day, and harde the fowlys synge; than somewhat he was comforted.'⁵ And when in the adventure of the magic ship he achieves what by the standards of the *Queste* is a state of grace, Malory sends him off 'to play by the watirs syde, for he was somewhat wery of the shippe'.⁶ The most striking 'colour' in Malory's treatment of Lancelot is, however, the concluding passage of the *Tale*, deliberately added to make him appear in all his human greatness, undiminished by his experiences in the course of the Grail-quest:

. . . than sir Launcelot tolde the adventures of the Sangreall that he had sene. And all thys was made in the grete bookes and put up in almyres at Salysbury. And anone sir Bors seyde to sir Launcelot,

¹ I cannot follow Mr. C. S. Lewis in his attempt to attribute the triple scale of values to 'mediaeval writers' generally (loc. cit.). There is certainly no such thing in the French *Queste*. Cf. A. Pauphilet, *Études sur la Queste del Saint Graal*, p. 17.

² Cf. *Commentary*, notes 886₁₈ and 891₃₃₋₄.

³ Cf. *infra*, p. 894. According to the *Queste*, no one can touch the Grail, and the sick knight only touches the table on which the Grail stands: 'fait tant qu'il baise la table d'argent et touche a ses yeulx.'

⁴ The bright spring morning and the sunshine make him realize that 'Nostre Sire s'est courrouciés a lui'.

⁵ *Infra*, p. 896.

⁶ *Infra*, pp. 1011-12.

'Sir Galahad, youre owne sonne, salewed you by me, and aftir you my lorde kynge Arthure and all the hole courte. And so ded sir Percivale. For I buryed them both myne owne hondis in the cité of Sarras. Also, sir Launcelot, sir Galahad prayde you to remembir of thys unsyker worlde, as ye behyght hym whan ye were togydirs more than halffe a yere.' 'Thys ys trew', seyde sir Launcelot, 'now I truste to God hys prayer shall avayle me.' Than sir Launcelot toke sir Bors in hys armys and seyde, 'Cousyn, ye ar ryght wellcom to me! For all that ever I may do for you and for yours, ye shall fynde my poure body redy atte all tymes whyle the spyryte is in hit, and that I promyse you feythfully, and never to fayle. And wete ye well, gentyl cousyn sir Bors, that ye and I shall never departe in sundir whylisoure lyves may laste.'¹

This, like most of Malory's additions, contradicts both the letter and the spirit of the French. Not only does the *Queste* omit to mention Lancelot at this point, but the part which it assigns to him throughout the story would preclude him from joining the Grail knights—Galahad, Perceval, and Bors—and placing on record the events of the holy quest. No such obstacle exists in Malory's version: Lancelot remains to the end the dominating figure, and because he is spared the impersonal fate of a condemned sinner, he develops into something approaching a living character. No doubt, he speaks like a man who knows the significance of the mysteries which have been revealed to him. But his last promise to Bors—'never to depart in sundir' while their lives last—comes primarily from a faithful friend, from a true champion of all the good and noble knights of King Arthur, more conscious than ever of the bond which unites him to the other heroes of the great adventure, 'redy atte all tymes' while the spirit lives in his 'poure body'. These may be but occasional glimpses of character; but the rudiments of the art are there, and the sentiments brought into play are sufficiently true and delicate to remain attached to the story and its protagonist. They are of the order of those 'familiar manifestations of emotions' which, in Aristotle's words, 'carry conviction'.

(c) *The Tragic Conception*

If Malory's rejection of the theology of the *Queste* set him free to attempt a delineation of character, it led to an even

¹ *Infra*, pp. 1036-7.

more striking result in his adaptation of the next and last branch of the Cycle, the *Mort Artu*. The decisive factor in his approach to this work was his drastic simplification of the spiritual tangle in which the traditional story of Arthur had become involved. In the chronicles of Geoffrey of Monmouth and of Wace the downfall of Arthur's kingdom had no relation to any religious or moral doctrine: it was a typical epic story of the 'defence of a narrow place against odds'. But when in the second quarter of the thirteenth century French prose writers introduced it in the Arthurian Cycle and placed it immediately after the *Queste* they found it necessary to read a new meaning into it. The *Queste* condemned the Round Table in no uncertain terms: 'In this quest your knighthood will avail you nothing if the Holy Ghost does not open the way for you in all your adventures.' The knights destined to achieve the holy quest — *li encerchemenz des grans secrez et des privetex Nostre Seignor*¹—were those who had hitherto had little or no part in the adventures of the Round Table: Galahad, Bors, and Perceval. The great heroes of Arthurian chivalry were disqualified either wholly, like Gawain, or partly, like Lancelot, who was permitted to enter the Grail castle, but not to see the Grail or even cross the threshold of the sanctuary. It was only natural, therefore, that the compilers of the Cycle should have imagined that in the end the Round Table perished because it had offended God. Thus a link was established between the religious teaching of the *Queste* and the events related in the *Mort Artu*. The issue was complicated rather than clarified by the addition of the 'wheel of Fortune' motif. To this the author of the *Mort Artu* gave considerable prominence. The idea of the relentless motion of the fatal wheel causing the downfall of those who rise too high—a christianized conception of *Fortuna*—had been common enough throughout the Middle Ages,² but it was quite distinct from the doctrine of the *Queste*. As, however, it provided an additional reason for the fall of Arthur it was

¹ 'The seeking out of the high secrets and hidden things of our Lord.'

² On its diffusion see R. Patch, *The Goddess Fortune in Mediaeval Literature*, Harvard University Press, 1927. On the treatment of the theme in the *Mort Artu* see Jean Frappier, *Étude sur la Mort le Roi Artu*, pp. 258 ff.

tacked on to the story with the result that in the *Mort Artu* the disaster was interpreted partly as a retribution for the sins of Arthur's knights and partly as a sequel to their rise: 'Tel sont li orgueil terrien qu'il n'i a nul si haut assiz qu'il ne le conviegne cheoir de la poesté del monde.'¹

Of this elaborate attempt to give the story of Arthur's death a spiritual background nothing of importance remains in Malory's version.² Despite the French Cycle he treats the *Queste* and the *Mort Artu* as self-contained works and suppresses every link between them.³ To understand his account of the tragedy of Lancelot and of the destruction of the Round Table it is enough to read his last two romances, *The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere* and the *Morte Arthur*—the only two that form together a coherent whole.⁴ The *Morte Arthur* is built round a theme which is suggested in the seemingly disconnected episodes of the *Book of Launcelot and Guinevere*: in the opening dialogue between Lancelot and Guinevere, in the story of the maid of Astolat, and in the adventure of the Knight of the Cart. On the familiar bright landscape with its smiling meadows, on the glittering armour of knights riding in search of adventure, dark and ominous shadows begin to fall. We no longer see Arthur's

¹ *La Mort le Roi Artu*, ed. Frappier, p. 201. Cf. also the editor's remark in his *Etude*, etc., p. 288: 'L'auteur a repris à sa façon l'idée de la fatalité antique: il ne pouvait guère l'envisager que dans les limites de la religion. Mais cette contrainte relative n'a peut-être pas nui à la richesse psychologique de son œuvre, car elle ajoute des nuances chrétiennes au vieux thème du Destin.'

² The description of the wheel of Fortune seen by Arthur in his dream is reproduced, but all comment is omitted, and no attempt is made to relate the symbolism of the wheel to Arthur's fate.

³ Mr. C. S. Lewis (loc. cit.) thinks that 'it is an essential part of the tragedy of Launcelot that he should be given the chance of escaping from this human level on which tragedy is foredoomed, and should have failed to take it'. This is probably true of the French Cycle, but there is no evidence that Malory held any such view or that he regarded Lancelot's return to Guinevere as a 'relapse'. Rightly or wrongly he refrained from relating the tragedy of Lancelot to his condemnation in the *Queste*, and the references to the *Tale of the Sankgreal* in the opening paragraphs of the *Book of Launcelot and Guinevere* have no 'moral' significance.

⁴ This is partly the effect of Malory's choice and arrangement of the material he found in his sources. The *Book of Launcelot and Guinevere* is based on two French romances: the *Mort Artu*, and a still undiscovered version of the prose *Lancelot*. The *Morte Arthur* is derived partly from the French *Mort Artu* and partly from the English stanzaic *Le Morte Arthur*; but instead of using these two sources one after the other, Malory uses them simultaneously, with a degree of freedom and independence unparalleled in his earlier works.

companions perform endless feats of bravery; we hear less of their glorious record, of their ultimate reward. Lancelot is still the greatest of all knights; but with each new episode he seems to lose something of his early enthusiasm, of his faith in the glory of knight-errantry.¹ 'Do ye forthynke yourselff of youre dedis?' Guinevere asks him. There is a strange foreboding in these simple words. The last adventure in the *Book of Launcelot and Guinevere* shows Lancelot at the height of his knightly renown. Of all the knights of the Round Table he alone is privileged to heal the wounds of Sir Urry. But when the adventure is over, 'Sir Launcelot wepte as he had bene a chyld that had bene betyn'. The peripety, the 'tragic reversal of fortunes', is now upon us.² It is brought to its climax in the terms of the traditional story of the downfall of Arthur's kingdom, reinterpreted and reshaped in accordance with Malory's own *sen*.³ Geoffrey of Monmouth had been the first to describe how Arthur, having subdued the peoples of the British Isles, was crowned in Caerleon upon Usk, how he then extended his sway to Norway, to Gaul, and to Rome, how during the Roman campaign his nephew Mordred started a rebellion, and how on his return to England Arthur fell in the final contest with the traitor. French prose writers had endeavoured to give this story a deeper significance by complicating both its narrative content and its motivation, and above all by linking it up with the spiritual doctrine of the Grail and with the symbolism of the 'wheel of Fortune'. Malory went further. Externally, his *Most Piteous Tale of the Morte Arthur Sanz Gwerdon* may seem to be a mere abridgement of the French

¹ There is a similar development in the *Mort Artu*, but it is treated as a consequence of Lancelot's experiences in the quest of the Grail. 'Il n'ose pas recommencer au su de tous ses exploits chevaleresques ni se montrer publiquement soucieux de cette gloire mondaine si contraire à l'esprit de la *Quête*. Amour-propre, pudeur morale, scrupule religieux peut-être, Lancelot éprouve à la fois tous ces sentiments' (Jean Frappier, *Etude sur la Mort le Roi Artu*, p. 230).

² E. K. Chambers, loc. cit.

³ In my monograph on Malory (Oxford, 1929) I took the view that Malory merely disengaged the dramatic curve from unnecessary ramifications and by so doing produced his 'New Arthuriad' (pp. 95 ff.). This no longer seems to me to do him justice. Mere condensation of narrative is too mechanical a process to account for what appears to be, in the light of a more detailed study, the essential quality of his rendering. The difference between him and his predecessors is not in the *matiere* alone; it lies predominantly in the *sen*.

Mort Artu, supplemented by drafts on the English stanzaic *Le Morte Arthur*; in actual fact it is a work of striking originality. Its dominating theme is neither a mere accident of warfare as in the Arthurian chronicles, nor a somewhat forced conclusion of a confused moral issue as in the French Cycle; it is primarily a conflict of two loyalties, both deeply rooted in the medieval conception of knightly service: on the one hand, the heroic loyalty of man to man, 'the mutual love of warriors who die together fighting against odds', a loyalty 'more passionate and less ideal than our patriotism',¹ more sacred even than the ties of nature;² on the other, the blind devotion of the knight-lover to his lady, the romantic self-denial imposed by the courtly tradition and inseparable from any form of courtly romance. The clash between these conceptions of human love and service is neither an accident nor a caprice of destiny; it is inherent in the very structure of medieval idealism. And in Malory's rendering of the story of Arthur's death it brings about, for the first time in the history of the legend, a clear and convincing interplay of emotions, infinitely more significant than any encounter with chance.

This result is achieved by subtle, though simple, means. The essential *motif*—the breach of one sacred trust through a whole-hearted acceptance of another—was already implicit in the French *Mort Artu* and in the English *Le Morte Arthur*. But each of the two conflicting forces—the power of the love of man for man and the power of courtly devotion—had to be brought out more convincingly. It was not enough that in rescuing Guinevere Lancelot should have unwittingly killed Gawain's half-anonymous brothers as he does in Malory's sources; one of his victims had to be Gareth, the noble knight, who loved Lancelot 'bettir than all hys brethirn and the kynge bothe'.³ This is part of Malory's own narrative design, of a *sen* unknown to his models, as original as Lancelot's premonition of the coming disaster: 'And peradventure I shall there destroy som of my beste fryndis, and that shold moche repente me. And peradventure there be

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, p. 10.

² Cf. A. J. Carlyle, *Mediaeval Political Theory in the West*, vol. iii, p. 25.

³ *Infra*, p. 1185.

som, and they coude wel brynge it aboute, or disobeye my lord kynge Arthur, they wold sone come to me, the which I were loth to hurte.¹ But Lancelot's duty is clear, even though 'that ys hard for to do'.² When the news is brought to Gawain that his brothers Gaheris and Gareth have been killed by Lancelot, he at first refuses to believe it. He is bound to Lancelot by ties of friendship and comradeship which have so far stood the hardest tests. He has forgiven him the deaths of Agravain, of Florens, and of Lovell, even though Arthur had told him that he had 'no cause to love Lancelot'. But when he knows for certain that his two beloved brothers, Gaheris and Gareth, are dead he makes a vow upon which eventually the fortunes of the whole of Arthur's kingdom will break: 'From thys day forewarde I shall never fayle sir Launcelot untyll that one of us have slayne the othir.'³ The fratricidal struggle then begins, with each opponent keenly conscious of his profound attachment to the other. 'I requyre and beseche you', says Lancelot,⁴ 'sythyn that I am thus requyred and conjoured to ryde into the fylde, that neyther you, my lorde kyng Arthur, nother you, sir Gawayne, com nat into the fylde.' And when he is forced to fight his dearest friend, Gawain, to throw him off his horse and wound him, he still refuses to put him to death, for it is shame 'to smite a wounded man that may not stand'.⁵ But the harm is done. Gawain dies of his old wound, repenting on his death-bed of his 'hastiness and wilfulness': 'For I am smyten upon the old wounde the whiche sir Launcelot gave me, on the which I fele well I muste dye. And had sir Launcelot bene with you, as he was, this unhappy werre had never begonne, and of all thys I am causar.' The 'unhappy war' is not at an end, and the 'piteous tale' goes on until the Round Table becomes a mere memory. Early in the day Arthur knows that disaster is at hand: 'Wyte you wel, my herte was never so hevvy as hit ys now. And much more I am

¹ *Infra*, p. 1172.

² *Infra*, p. 1173.

³ *Infra*, p. 1186.

⁴ There is no counterpart to this speech in Malory's sources.

⁵ The reason given in the French *Mort Artu* is slightly different: 'De ce est Lancelos trop dolenz, car il ne volsist en nule maniere que messire Gauvains moreust par lui; car il l'avoit tant esprouvé qu'il ne cuidoit pas au matin qu'il eüst en li tant de proesce comme il i avoit le jor trovee; et ce fu li hom del monde qui plus ama bons chevaliers que Lancelos' (ed. Frappier, pp. 176-7).

soryar for my good knyghtes losse than for the losse of my fayre queen; for quenys I myght have inow, but such felyship of good knyghtes shall never be togydirs in no company.' Only Malory's Arthur can say with such characteristic abruptness, 'quenys I myght have inow'; but perhaps for this very reason only Malory's Arthur can gauge the full depth of his grief at the destruction of his fellowship, the equal of which has not been seen in any Christian land, and the significance of his own defeat by the traitor Mordred in that last of all battles when 'of all the good knights are left no more alive but two', and a hundred thousand lie dead upon the down. The action which leads to this ending is swift, inevitable, relentless; the tragic circle of fear and pity is complete. And the aftermath brings home the profound humanity of it. When Lancelot comes to avenge the King and the Queen he finds that the Queen has retired from the world. To share her fate he becomes a hermit; not for the love of God, but for the love of the Queen: 'And therefore, lady, sithen you have taken you to perfection I must needs take me to perfection of right.' A year later he is allowed to bury her. And although it may be as a hermit that at first 'he wepte not gretelye, but syghed', it is as her faithful lover that 'when she was put in the erth syr Launcelot swouned and laye longe styлле'. To the hermit who reproves him for thus displeasing God he replies:

'My sorow may never have ende, for whan I remembre of his beaulté and of hir noblesse that was bothe wyth hyr Kyng and wyth hyr, so whan I sawe his corps and hir corps so lye togyders, truly myn herte wold not serve to susteyne my careful body. Also whan I remembre me how by my defaute and myn orgule and my pryde that they were bothe layed ful lowe that were pereles that ever was lyvying of Cristen people, wyt you wel,' sayd syr Launcelot, 'this remembered of there kyndenes and myn unkyndenes sanke so to myn herte that I myght not susteyne myself.'

He repents not of the sins he has committed against God, but of the griefs he has caused his lady and King Arthur. And so there is no relief to his pain: 'Ever he was lyeng groveling on the tombe of kyng Arthur and queen Guenever, and there was no comferte that the bysshop nor syr Bors nor none of his felowes coude make hym, it avaylled not.' Death

alone brings him comfort, and as he lay on his death-bed it seemed as though 'he had smyled, and the sweetest savour aboute hym'. In the earlier scene of Arthur's last farewell there is the same sense of unrelieved loneliness. 'Comfort thyself', Arthur says to Bedwere, 'and doo as wel as thou mayst, for in me is no truste for to truste in. For I wyl to the vale of Avylyon to hele me of my grievous wounds.' There is no remedy for Arthur's wounds, and no truth in the belief in his eventual return. 'I wyl not say that it shal be so.' And when night falls on the plain of Salisbury there is no 'trust left to trust in', no comfort to be found in religious explanations; all doctrine shrivels before the conflict of 'two goods' and the desolation it brings. It is not through sin or weakness of heart that this comes about, but through the devotion of the truest friend and the truest lover, through a tragic greatness which fixes for ever the complex and delicate meaning of Arthur's epic. And in the noble close of Malory's final chapter, in the threnody of Hector over Lancelot's dead body, the pure and passionate chord is struck again, enriched and sustained by harmonies unknown to lesser writers: 'Thou, sir Launcelot, there thou lvest, that thou were never matched of erthely knyghtes handel! And thou were the curtest knyght that ever bare shelde, and thou were the truest frende to thy lover that ever bestrade hors, and thou were the trewest lover of a synful man that ever loved woman, and thou were the kyndest man that ever strake wyth swerde.'

CHAPTER IV

THE METHOD OF EDITING

1. *The Texts*

FOR four and a half centuries the nearest any reader could get to Malory's text was Caxton's edition 'enprynted and fynnysshed in thabbey of Westmestre the last day of Juyl the yere of our Lord mccccclxxxv'. The edition was based on a 'cople' which Sir Thomas Malory had 'taken out of certeyn bookes of Frensshe and reduced into Englysshe'. In his Preface, where this remark occurs, Caxton does not say that he received the 'cople' direct from Malory, and the chronological gap between Malory's death in 1471 and the publication of the work in 1485 would seem to suggest that he did not. Nor does it follow from Caxton's statement that the 'cople' he used was Malory's original manuscript. But as until recently no manuscript of Malory has been known to exist, all the editions published from the fifteenth century to the present day had to depend either directly or indirectly on Caxton's. Their history is uneventful. Only two copies of Caxton's print are extant: one in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, the other, wanting eleven leaves,¹ in the John Rylands Library in Manchester. Each of these, however, represents a slightly different 'state' of the text: corrections at Caxton's printing house were not limited to proofs, but were made in the formes after printing off had begun, with the result that in the two extant copies of the *Morte Darthur* there are four folios in which conflicting readings occur in practically every line.² In addition to this, there are thirty-three minor variants elsewhere, mostly in small batches. It was some such 'state' of the work that Caxton's disciple and successor Wynkyn de Worde used for his 1498 edition of the *Booke of the Noble Kyng, Kyng Arthur*. In 1529 he issued another, which was used by the two subsequent editors, William Copland (1557) and

¹ Sig. li, rvi, rvii, Nii, Nvii, Tiiij, Tv, eeiii-vi. These have been replaced by Whittaker's somewhat imperfect facsimiles. See *Bibliography*.

² For a fuller account of the problem see *Bibliography*.

Thomas East (c. 1585). A 'newly refined' version of Thomas East's text appeared in 1634 at William Stansby's press. This was the last of the black-letter editions, and in spite of its obvious remoteness from the original it held the field until the second half of the last century¹ as 'the latest of the old prints', 'with the sprinkling of obsolete words, not sufficiently numerous to be embarrassing'.² A radical change in editorial practice was made in 1868 by Edward Strachey.³ Realizing that 'nothing could justify the reprinting of the most corrupt of all the old editions when the first and the best was within reach', he went back to Caxton, and his example was soon followed by H. Oskar Sommer. The word-for-word reprint of the Rylands (then Spencer) copy which appeared in Sommer's monumental work on the *Morte Darthur* (1889-91) has since been used by the vast majority of Malory's editors.⁴ Their return to Caxton was certainly welcome in that it helped to remove from the text the alterations introduced by Wynkyn de Worde and his successors. But the text still provided no answer to these vital questions: How different was Caxton's 'cōpye' from Malory's? And how far did Caxton alter it when he prepared it for the press?

Such was the position until 23 July 1934 when Mr. W. F. Oakeshott announced in *The Times* the discovery of a hitherto unidentified paper manuscript of Malory's writings belonging to the Fellows' Library of Winchester College. In an article published a month later (*The Times*, 27 August 1934) Mr. Oakeshott stated that the manuscript contained no indication of early ownership, its binding being comparatively modern, that the 1630 catalogue of the college library made no mention of it, and that the first entry was found in the catalogue of 1839. Palaeographical evidence suggested, however, that the manuscript was roughly contemporary with Caxton's edition, if not a little earlier. As our facsimiles show, it is in the handwriting of two different scribes.⁵ The

¹ The only exception is Southey's edition (1817) based partly on Caxton and partly on Wynkyn de Worde.

² Cf. *La Mort d'Arthur*, etc., ed. Thomas Wright (1856 and 1866), Introduction.

³ *Morte Darthur*, &c., ed. Edward Strachey, p. xxxiv.

⁴ A reprint of Wynkyn de Worde's first edition was published by the Shakespeare Head Press in 1933.

⁵ Mr. Oakeshott has pointed out (*The Times Literary Supplement*, 27 September

finer of the two hands (see Facsimile 2) is similar to that from which some English type of the late fifteenth century was designed.¹ Both hands show affinities with the Chancery hand of the period,² and one of the watermarks is identical in design and almost identical in size with that on a document dated 1475.³ More important still is the fact that while the manuscript is neither Malory's own 'copy' nor the one used by Caxton, it is at least as reliable as Caxton's text and quite independent of it.⁴ It supplies some of Caxton's obvious omissions, particularly in the *Tale of Arthur and Lucius*, and often agrees with Malory's sources where Caxton is at variance with them.⁵ On the other hand, there are numerous readings in Caxton which, on the evidence of Malory's sources, appear to be more authentic than the corresponding readings in the Winchester MS.⁶ The two texts are, then, collateral versions of a common original, and each contains at least some elements of it which are not otherwise extant. Thus Malory's '*bole of the tree*' becomes *body* in the Winchester MS. and *hoole* in Caxton;⁷ of the phrase *launcis and speres* the former preserves *launcis*, the latter *speres*;⁸ and *a ryver that hyght Mortays* ('l'iaue grant que on apeloit

1934) that 'hand A was probably in charge of this job, for in two instances he has started off hand B on a new book, and hand B has taken over after six lines or so'. The two instances are ff. 35^r (Facsimile 3) and 45^r. Facsimile 1 (facing p. xiv) is another example of hand B. Apart from ff. 35^r and 45^r the text is divided between the two hands as follows: ff. 9^r-44^v, 191^v-229^r, 349^r-484^v are in hand A, ff. 45^r-191^r, 229^v-346^v in hand B. Ff. 1-8, 32-3, 347-8, and 485-492 are missing.

¹ e.g. that used by Machlinia in London about 1486. Cf. W. F. Oakeshott, 'Caxton and Malory's *Morte Darthur*', *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, 1935, pp. 113-14.

² This has been established by J. A. Collins (cf. *Times Lit. Sup.*, loc. cit.), who also read a phrase in blind scratches twice repeated at the top of one page as 'Know all men by these presents'. It seems likely that the manuscript came from a scriptorium where legal documents were familiar.

³ Cf. *The Times*, 27 August 1934. Another detail of some interest is that a vellum fragment used to repair a tear in the manuscript has on the gummed side part of an indulgence granted by Innocent VIII in 1489 and printed by Caxton. This suggests that the manuscript was at one time, probably somewhere about 1500, in the hands of a London binder.

⁴ See my article on 'Malory's *Morte Darthur* in the Light of a Recent Discovery' in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. lxix, No. 2, July 1935.

⁵ Cf. *supra*, p. xxiv. In my critical apparatus C's readings inconsistent with the evidence supplied by Malory's sources are marked with a dagger (C†).

⁶ For examples see, in my critical apparatus, any of the readings introduced by the sign C* and followed by references to Malory's sources.

⁷ Cf. *infra*, p. 255, line 7.

⁸ Cf. *infra*, p. 229, line 17.

In the beginning of Arthur (for he was chosen kynge
by adventure and by grace for the moste pty of the barons) Ende nat he was
Ether Wendragon son sent as her son. made hit kynny knyght. Sent
yet many knyghts and lordis sylle hym grete weye for that cause. Went well
Arthur on com hem all the moste pty dayes of hys lyff he was ruled by p counsaile
of herloun. So hit sette on a tyme kyng Arthur sende into acherloun ayn la
idones. Well let me have no rest hit. nedis / myste take a wyff. / Wille none
take hit by thy counsaile and advice. / Hit ys well done sende herloun that
ye take a wyff. / For a man of youre bonite and nobles sholde
not be w^onte a wyff. / Now is p^ony sende. / Dearloun that
ye love more than a noy. ye sende kyng Arthur. / I love Gwe
nyvere the kyngs daughter of lodegrian of p^olonde of Cam
berde the wyf of gold p^oty. / In q^o house the table rounde that ye
tolde me he had hit of my fadir. / Utter. And the daimself is the
moste valyante and faryest that I knowe byng or yet that eu
I conde fynde. / Sentid sende dearloun as off her beante and farye
nesse she is one of the faryest on hys. / But and ye loved her not
so well as ye do I sholde fynde you a daimself of beante and
of goodnesse that sholde hye you and please you and youre
herte were nat sette. / But there as mannes herte is sette
he wolle be lott to retorne. that is trouthe sende kyng Arthur.
Dearloun warned the kyng covertly that Gweynere was nat
holson for q^ony to take to wyff. / For he warned hym that lara
celot sholde love her and seke hym a gayne. And so he turned q^o
tale to the adventures of the Saubegreal. / Then as desyred of
the kyng for to have men w^o hym p^o sholde enquire of Gweynere
and so the kyng granted hym and so. / Dearloun wente forth
vnto kyng lodegrian of Camberde and tolde hym of the desyre
of the kyng p^o he wolde have vnto q^o wyff. / Gweynere q^o doug
that is to me sende kyng lodegrian the bestre tryng that
eu I herde. that is so worthy a kyng of probesse & noblesse wol wedde
my doug. And as for my londis I wolde geff q^o hym of / wyffe

Marcoise') becomes *a ryver and an mortays* in the manuscript and a *ryuer and an hyhe montayn* in the printed text.¹

There is reason to believe, however, that neither Caxton nor the Winchester scribes had access to the original form of Malory's work. The following sentence in Caxton—totally unintelligible as it stands, but reproduced without comment by all modern editors—should suffice to prove this:

And the mean whyle word came vnto sir Launcelot and to sir Trystram that sire Carados the myghty kynge that was made lyke a gyaunt that fought with sir Gawayn and gaf hym suche strokes that he swooned in his sadel (VIII. 28).

This reading is the result of two mistranscriptions: the words *made lyke a gyaunt that* are clearly a corruption of some such phrase as *made lyke a gyaunt whyght* (or *whycht*); some early scribe, mistaking the final *t* for *e*, made *whyght* (or *whycht*) into *whyche*, and a later redactor, probably Caxton himself, changed *whyche* to *that*. The first of these two errors is found in the Winchester MS.; hence it must have occurred in the common source of our texts, and this source (X) could not, therefore, have been Malory's own manuscript.

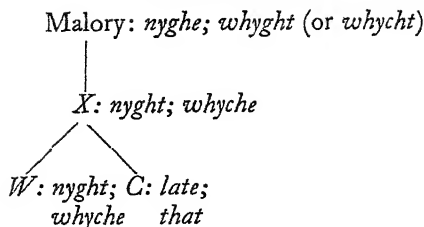
The same conclusion is suggested by the remarkable story of Maris de la Roche who after being killed in battle reappears unscathed. 'Sir Lucas', writes the Winchester scribe, 'saw kynge Angwysshaunce that nyght had slayne Maris de la Roche.' Finding some such remark in his original, Caxton, in an attempt to improve its grammar, replaced *nyght* by *late* and printed: 'Thenne lucas sawe kyng Agwysaunce that late hadde slayne Morys de la roche.'² Malory's reading was obviously *nyghe* ('almost'),³ mistaken for *nyght* by one of his copyists. This error, like *gyaunt whyche*, was, then, one of the features which distinguished the common source of C and W from the primitive text. The following stemma would account for the filiation of variants in both these cases:

¹ Cf. *infra*, p. 934, line 27.

² Book I, ch. 15.

³ In Malory's French source Maris is nearly killed, but escapes thanks to the timely assistance of Lucas the Butler. Cf. *Commentary*, note 308-9.

Introduction



Needless to say, the straight lines connecting *X* and *W* on one side and *X* and *C* on the other do not imply that *X* was the *immediate* model of either *C* or *W*. There is, in fact, good reason to believe that it was not. A number of passages in *W*, such as the one analysed on p. xcvi, can only be accounted for as a result of two or more successive scribal errors. When, for instance, the two texts offer these two readings:

C (= *X*)

anon sire Tristram *redde them and*
wete ye well he was gladde for theryn
was many a pyteous complaynte
Thenne sir Tristram said lady Bran-
gwayne ye shalle ryde with me

W

anone seyde lady dame Bran-
gwayne ye shall ryde with me

the discrepancy between them can best be explained if two successive transcriptions are assumed: one in which the recurrence of *sire Tristram* caused the omission of the italicized words, and the other in which *anon sire Tristram said* was contracted to *anon said*.¹ As the second of these errors swept away the very words which had caused the first, the two could not have occurred simultaneously. Hence the first error belongs neither to *X* nor to *W* but to some state of the text intermediate between the two.

There are equally strong grounds for assuming at least one intermediary between *X* and *C*. In the episode of the 'dolorous stroke' *C* describes the collapse of King Pellam's castle in very strange terms: the castle, we are told, 'that was fall doune through that dolorous stroke lay vpon Pellam and balyn for thre dayes'. *C* then remarks that at the end of the third day Pellam still suffered from some

¹ This type of error, induced by the recurrence of the initial letter, only occurs between words standing close to each other. It could not have occurred until *sire* and *said* had been brought close together by the omission of the italicized words.

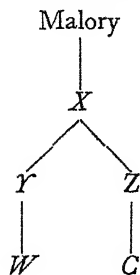
minor injuries while Balin recovered. This incredible story, like so many of *C*'s incoherences, has reappeared in all the modern editions of the *Morte Darthur*, and no editor or critic has so far questioned its cogency. Fortunately, with the aid of *W*, we can discover what Malory—and *X*—really wrote. *For the moste party of that castell, writes W, was dede thorow the dolorouse stroke. Ryght so lay kynge Pellam and Balyne three dayes.* In other words, Pellam and Balin did not lie buried under the castle, but were injured by its fall and lay wounded for three days. To make this simple statement into *C*'s preposterous account at least two, possibly three, successive copyists must have been at work. Thus the same scribe may have omitted the words *Ryght so* and inserted *upon* between *lay* and *kynge Pellam*; but it was not until this was done that some grammatically minded reviser, probably Caxton himself, could have wished to make the previous sentence into a subordinate clause by adding *that* after *castell*. We must, then, assume at least three stages of transcription:

X: . . . castell was dede thorow the dolorouse stroke *Ryght so lay kynge Pellam*

Z: . . . castell was dede thorow the dolorouse stroke lay upon kynge Pellam

C: . . . castell *that* was fall doune through that dolorous stroke lay upon Pellam

Z and *X* may, for all we know, each represent several states of the text along the lines connecting *X* with *W* and *X* with *C* respectively. With this qualification the foregoing conclusions may be graphically expressed thus:



2. The Principles of Reconstruction

Since the primary aim of any critical edition is a text which would approach as closely as the extant material allows to the original form of the work, the real question before us is how far the material now available for the study of Malory's text will allow us to go in this direction. It stands to reason that whatever is common to *C* and *W* can and must be credited to *X*, but *X* is not, after all, Malory's own text, and even if we were content to edit *X* instead of Malory, we should still have to decide what we should do with the numerous passages in which its two derivatives differ.

The problem is similar to that which confronts a critic attempting to edit a text from two different families of manuscripts—a common, if distressing, occurrence in textual criticism. The traditional method consists in selecting from each of the two texts or groups of texts the 'best' readings they can offer so as to produce what is often inappropriately called a 'critical' text. Admittedly the value of such a text depends on the clear understanding that what is 'best' is not what seems best to the critic, but what is attributable to the author. And it so happens that it is not humanly possible for any critic, however cautious and competent, to maintain this distinction. For the more he is bent on his task, the less he can conceive of himself and the author as two distinct individuals whose ways of thinking and writing are inevitably unlike, who are both liable to err, each in his own unaccountable way, just as they are capable of choosing two equally 'good', but conflicting, forms of expression. There may be various degrees of skill in the handling of the situation, and various degrees of accuracy in the results; but the procedure proves in the end just as disastrous in the case of, say, Wendelin Foerster compiling from several manuscripts, with his unique knowledge of twelfth-century French, a composite and totally unreal text of Chrestien de Troyes, as it did in the case of Pope who took from the various Quartos any readings which pleased him and inserted them into his edition of Shakespeare; for the fault lies not with individual editors, but with certain habits of mind inseparable from any practical application of the method, habits which

broadly speaking amount to the belief that whatever satisfies one's taste and judgement must be 'good', and that whatever is 'good' belongs to the author.

The growing realization of this inevitable fallacy has induced some of the leading scholars of our time to adopt a totally sceptical attitude towards any attempt at editing and indeed to condemn any critical treatment of manuscript material beyond a mere reproduction of the extant tradition or of one of its representatives. The reaction has been a beneficial one in that it has helped to save a number of texts from unwelcome interference. But its real importance lies in the fact that it suggests a different attitude to criticism and imposes new and vital tasks upon the critic. The line of least resistance in textual studies is to declare a reading corrupt and substitute one's own. Refusal to emend the extant tradition on mere grounds of preference carries with it the obligation to spare no effort in interpreting each unemended reading. Now interpretation may mean two things: the elucidation of what is there, and the explanation of how it came to be what it is. And should what is there defeat all attempts at understanding, it might still be possible to explain how it came about, in other words, to detail the processes which have produced it. The problem of editing, far from being brushed away as it often is by the less thoughtful followers of the 'conservative' school, would then arise in a new form. Instead of the unanswerable question, 'What is the author, as we know him, likely to have said?' we should ask ourselves, in the first place, 'What does the extant reading mean?' and if no satisfactory answer is forthcoming, go on to ask: 'Can it be shown to be a scribal error?' Answers to this last question may not, and most probably will not, yield a complete reconstruction of any single text preserved in copied manuscripts; but only such answers can serve the true purpose of textual criticism: they alone can lessen the damage done to the text by its copyists and so produce a result similar to that recognized as the aim of restoration in the realm of the fine arts, namely a *partial* reconstruction of the lost original from what is extant. Our task so defined may appear to be unduly limited. It may be more pleasing to the mind to aim higher, more tempting

to borrow the author's pen and profess to speak for him. But as long as our respect for the work is greater than our power of guessing the truth, we can but adopt the humbler course.

(a) *Textual evidence* (π)

To the question, 'Can this reading be shown to be a scribal error?' there is often no answer, for there is no general rule as to how a scribe should behave in any given circumstances, and the most important type of scribal error is the unaccountable one, that which occurs through one word coming into a scribe's mind and being written down in place of another. But there are, on the other hand, 'definable' and, consequently, emendable errors—those which are typical of the process of copying as distinct from that of original writing. The reading of the text, the passage of the eye from the text to the copy, and the passage of the eye from the copy back to the text—these are the actions which constitute the technique of copying, and emendable errors are those which occur as a result of their imperfect performance. In an empirical fashion such errors have long been known to critics; but they cannot be properly dealt with, and sometimes cannot even be recognized, without a clear understanding of their nature and origin.¹

Reading of the text. A scribe may either inadvertently or deliberately misread his text. Examples of unintentional misreadings have been quoted in another connexion in the previous section of this chapter (*nyght* for *nyghe* and *whyche* for *whyght*). Mistaken contractions account for such misspellings of proper names as *Barcias* for *Bracias* (in *C*) and *Traqun* for *Tarquyn* (in *W*), while failure to notice a contraction in a manuscript no doubt explains *C*'s utterly unintelligible remark in Book XX, ch. 7: 'the lawe was suche in the dayes that what someuer they were of what estate or degree yf they were fonde gylty of treson there shold be none other remedy but dethe and *outher the men or the takynge with the dede* shold be causer of their hasty Iugement.'

¹ For a more detailed analysis see my 'Principles of Textual Emendation' in *Studies in French Language and Literature presented to Professor M. K. Pope*, Manchester, 1939, pp. 351-69.

The original reading was, of course, not *men*, but *menour* (= behaviour), as in *W*.¹

The Winchester scribes copy their text mechanically and seldom, if ever, attempt to correct it. Caxton, on the other hand, is an editor rather than a scribe. He often tries to improve on his original where the latter seems to him to be deficient, although, as has already been shown, he is rather apt to be content with a mere appearance of sense.² His more sweeping corrections are prompted either by his sense of editorial economy or by his general conception of the form and structure of the book (*v. supra*, pp. xxix–xxxiii) or occasionally by his peculiar moral bias. The curiously expurgated version of the oath taken by Arthur's knights may be an example of this last variety:³

W

and allwayes to do ladyes, damesels,
and jantilwomen and wydowes
[socour]: strengthe hem in hir
ryghtes, and never to enforce them
uppon payne of dethe

C

and alweyes to doo ladyes,
damoyseles and gentylwym-
men socour vpon payne of
dethe

From the copy to the text. After writing down a word or a group of words (sometimes only a letter or a group of letters) the scribe has to go back to the original and find the 'right place'. To do this he must carry in his mind the last letter, word, or words he has written down, or sometimes the letter or word that he has to copy next. If, as is often the case, the word or letter he is looking for occurs more than once within a comparatively small space, he may easily pick up his text at some later point and omit the intervening matter. In *W* such omissions (*sauts du même au même* or *homoeoteleuta*) occur at the slightest provocation: sometimes the mere recurrence of the final *e* is sufficient to cause them. In the extract from *W* quoted at the end of the previous paragraph the recurrence of the initial *s* in two neighbouring words—*socour strengthe*—caused the disappearance of the first. Nor is it necessary that the recurrent element should be a word or

¹ *v. infra*, p. 1174.

² His attempt to 'correct' the description of the death of Maris de la Roche (*v. supra*, p. lxxxix) is an instance in point.

³ *v. infra*, p. 120.

a letter. It may be any feature of the text that the scribe happens to use as a *point de repère*. He may, for example, remember that to find the right place he must look for the beginning or the end of a line, or he may have a rough recollection of having copied say half or three-quarters of a line and look for the remaining half or quarter as the case may be. He would then be in danger of omitting a passage equal in length to one or several complete lines of his original.¹ In *C homoeoteleuta* are not only less frequent, but less easily detectable than in *W*, and therefore more treacherous. *C*'s remark that 'syre Bellangere reuenged the deth of his fader Alysaunder and *syr Tristram slewe Kynge Marke*' has so far been taken on its face value, and critics, including myself,² have tried to reconcile it with the traditional prose version of the Tristan story by making 'syr Tristram' the direct object of 'slewe'—an ingenious, but highly unsatisfactory interpretation. The real explanation is found in the corresponding place in *W*: 'Sir Bellyngere revenged the dethe of hys fadir sir Alysaundir and sir Trystram, *for he* (i.e. Sir Bellyngere) slewe kynge Marke.' Misled by the close resemblance between the *f* of *for* and the long *s* (*i*) of *slewe*, the printer's eye must have travelled straight from *Trystram* to *slewe*, and the vital words *for he* were lost in the process.³

The recurrence of similar or identical elements within a comparatively short space may cause yet another type of error. This may be described by the formula $MNO NP > MNONONP$. Having copied *MNO* the scribe would return to the first *N* instead of going on to the second, and in this way would duplicate *NO*. A curious instance of a duplication complicated by a *homoeoteleuton* occurs in the following extract from the *Tale of the Sankgreall* (the duplicated passage is reproduced in italics, and the passage affected by the *homoeoteleuton* in square brackets):

And there kynge Hurlaine was discomfite and hys men slayne. And he was aferde to be dede and fledde to thys shippe. And there founde this swerde and drew hit, and cam oute and founde kynge

¹ Cf. *infra*, p. 76, line 19.

² Cf. my *Roman de Tristan et Iseut dans l'œuvre de Thomas Malory*, p. 220.

³ By the same process 'Joseph[e], the son of Joseph of Arimathea' has become in *C* 'Joseph of Arimathea' (Book XVII, ch. 22; *v. infra*, p. 1034, line 33).

Labor, the man of the worlde of all Crystyn in whom there is the grettist faythe. And whan kynge Hurlaine was *discomfite and his menne slayne and he was aferde to be dede and fledde to thys shippe and there founde thys swerde and drew hit and* [cam oute . . . And whan kynge Hurlaine saw kynge Labor he dressid this swerde and] smote hym upon the helme.¹

The scribe's eye may occasionally wander off the line and so bring into the copy parasitic elements from any neighbouring part of the original, thus producing what may be called *contamination*. The strange remark in *W* to the effect that 'sir Bagdemagus tyll another tyme was wondirly wrothe that sir Tor was avaunced afore hym'² is an example of such an error: it is due to the fact that four lines above King Arthur declares that he will 'leve sir Bagdemagus tyll anothis tyme'. Similarly in the question put to Lancelot by the people of the castle of Corbenic—'Why have ye sene?'—the scribe substituted *Why* for *What* because the previous paragraph, which accidentally came into his field of vision, began with the words: 'Why have ye awaked me?'³ Sometimes—though comparatively rarely—contamination may result from a purely mental confusion, as in the compound *corealme*—a mixture of *countrie* and *realme*.⁴

From the text to the copy. Part of the process of transcription consists in transmitting from the mind to the hand each word and letter of the text. A slight acceleration in the movement of the hand or a slight slowing down of the transmission can easily upset their co-ordination and produce what is known as *dittography*; a letter, a syllable, or a word, or even a whole group of words, would then appear twice in the copy. Conversely, a slowing down of the movement of the hand or an acceleration in the transmission may cause part of the text to drop out. The omission of monosyllabic words, frequent in *W*, is a good example of this variety of *arrhythmia*.⁵

Combined errors. Most editors tacitly—perhaps unconsciously—assume that if they are dealing with one manuscript they are concerned with one scribe only. In reality, however,

¹ p. 987.

² pp. 131-2.

³ p. 1017.

⁴ p. 866.

⁵ Cf., in this volume, pp. 331⁶, 138²⁷, 277², 278¹², 281¹⁶, 285³, 326³², 339¹⁵, 360⁷, 406²⁸, 408¹, 411¹⁷.

most of the manuscripts which have come down to us from medieval times were copied not from the originals but from earlier copies, and contain therefore numerous readings resulting from two or more successive mistranscriptions of the same passage. The discovery of such readings or 'combined errors' has already helped us to establish the degree of proximity of our two texts to Malory's original manuscript. But it can also help us to establish the text. An instructive example, with which I have dealt at some length elsewhere,¹ occurs in one of the early sections of Malory's *Book of Sir Tristram*. Blamor, having been defeated by Tristram, says that he prefers death to dishonour and asks Tristram to kill him. Tristram appeals against this request to the kings who act as judges. The kings, however, refer him to Blamor's brother, Bleoberis who, much to their dismay, declares that Blamor must die. In *W* his reply is as follows:

My lordys seyde sir Bleoberys thoughe my brother be beatyn and have the worse in his body thorow myght of armys he hath nat beatyn his hearte.

In *C* the same speech reads thus:

My lordes said Bleoberys though my broder be beten and hath the wers thorow myghte of armes I dare saye though syre Trystram hath beten his body he hath not beten his herte.

If we place the two readings side by side *his body* will appear in *W* roughly a line above the same words in *C*, and most of the intervening matter will be found missing in *W*. This suggests that originally *his body* occurred twice (once as in *W* and again as in *C*) and that its recurrence caused a *homoeoteleuton*, i.e. the omission of the words *thorow myght of armys I dare saye though syre Trystram hath beten his body*. How, then, is it that the first four of these—*thorow myght of armys*—still occur in *W*? The only reasonable explanation seems to be that at the time when the *homoeoteleuton* occurred they stood outside its sphere of action, and that the reading of *X* was: . . . the worse thorow myght of armys in his body *I dare saye though syre Trystram hath beten his body*, &c.

In the next copy the italicized words dropped out, but it was not until the third stage of transcription that the order of

¹ *Principles of Textual Emendation*, pp. 363-4.

words could have been changed and the two phrases, *thorow myght of armys* and *in his body*, placed in reverse order, as in *W*. In *C*, on the other hand, the original reading appears to be intact except for the omission of 'in his body' before '*I dare*'—another case of a *saut du même au même*. The real interest of this example lies in the fact that neither *C* nor *W* offers here any apparent difficulty: both seem to give readings which any 'rational' critic would accept without a murmur, but which on our present showing turn out to be corrupt.

All the processes outlined above may in the course of the transmission of a text contribute to 'combined errors'. These may either be distributed over two or more successive copies as in the example just given, or occur simultaneously in one. In the former case their discovery supplies the missing links in the evolution of variants: sometimes a *homoeoteleuton* can only be traced if the 'key-word', lost at some subsequent stage of transcription, is restored to its proper place; or again, a hopelessly corrupt reading may turn out to be the result of a 'duplication' superimposed upon a *homoeoteleuton*. More obvious but no less vital are the 'simultaneous' combined errors such as the curious omission of the direct object in *W*'s remark: *the Pope called unto hym a noble clerke . . . and the Pope gaff undir leade and sente hem unto the kynge*.¹ Here a plural noun is clearly missing after *gaff*, but it can be restored once it is realized that in fifteenth-century manuscripts the word *bulles*, written with a stroke across the two *l*'s and an abbreviated *es*, looked very much like *buff* and was therefore apt to be omitted by any copyist after a word ending in *ff*. To make *gaff bulles undir* (or, as in *C*, *gaff hym bulles undir*) into *gaff undir* the scribe had to commit an 'unconscious misreading' and a *homoeoteleuton*, and both these errors must have occurred simultaneously.

(b) *External evidence (F)*

The preceding observations apply to almost any text preserved in copied manuscripts. But Malory's works offer yet another, much less common, approach to the problem. Among the great prose writers of all time he is perhaps the

¹ *v. infra*, p. 1194.

one who 'invented' least. He may sometimes disagree with the very spirit of his 'French books', alter their character and purpose, and introduce an atmosphere and a manner of his own; for all that, the greater part of his narrative is made of the material 'drawn briefly out of French'. In so far as this material is extant, it can, therefore, provide useful clues; for, barring accident, whatever either of our two texts has in common with the French must have reached it through Malory and can be safely ascribed to him. The following examples are among the simplest cases of this kind:

C	W	F (Malory's source)
(the asterisk denotes the correct reading)		
*he shotte hym thorou the sholder <i>with an arow</i>	he shotte hym thorow the sholdir ¹	cil le fiert d'une saiette envenimee
*toke his hors	toke hys swerde ²	vient a son cheval et monte
aboue the hede	*abovyn the bed ³	en milieu du lit
I am passyng heuy for your sake For ye wil not byleue that swerd shall be youre destruction	*I am passynge hevy for youre sake for <i>and ye wolle nat leve</i> that swerde hit shall be youre destruccion ⁴	Et je vous di fait elle que se vous l'emportés qu'il vous en mal averra

The more closely Malory follows his source the more often such cases appear in our texts and the easier it becomes to use the evidence of *F*. Nor can it be said that *F* merely confirms the validity of readings which would be recognized as genuine on other grounds: indeed the choice it suggests is sometimes contrary to most critics' 'rational' preference. In describing preparations for a tournament *C* remarks (Book VI, ch. 6) that *there were scaffoldis and holes that lordes and ladyes myghte beholde*. This has usually been taken as a hopelessly corrupt passage, and when Mr. Oakeshott first disclosed some of the features of the Winchester MS. he claimed to have found the correct reading of it: *scaffoldis and towrys* instead of *scaffoldis and holes*.⁵ *Towrys* may indeed seem preferable to *holes* in this context, although on further reflection the building of towers for the benefit of spectators at a tournament would probably strike the reader as an odd

¹ *v. infra*, p. 433.

² *v. infra*, p. 1004.

³ *v. infra*, p. 990.

⁴ *v. infra*, p. 64. As a result of the substitution of *ye wil not byleue* for *and ye wolle nat leve* the sense of the speech has undergone a radical change. In *W* the damsel expresses her concern about Balin (*hevy* = worried) because unless he abandons his sword it will cause his death; in *C* she is displeased with him (*hevy* = angry) because he refuses to believe that the sword can do him any harm.

⁵ 'The Text of Malory', *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 September 1934.

proceeding. All 'rational' conjectures as to this, however, are made unnecessary by the reading found in *F*. The French prose writer states that on the occasion of the tournament stands were erected and *windows* (*fenestres*) made (presumably in the woodwork) so as to enable the ladies to watch the fighting: *Celui jour firent li doy roy drechier loges en mi les prés, ou il avoit fenestres as dames et as damoiseles*.¹ That *C*'s *holes* is Malory's rendering of *fenestres* is evident; and this is confirmed by the fact that the *Catholicon Anglico* gives *holes* as an equivalent of *fenestra*. The seemingly corrupt reading thus turns out to be Malory's, and the seemingly 'better' one a corruption.

But the formulae $C + F = M$ (Malory) and $W + F = M$ are subject to one important qualification: they cannot be applied where there is a reasonable possibility of an *accidental* agreement between *C* and *F* or *W* and *F*. We can be certain, for instance, that in the following passage² *F*'s reading could have reached *C* only through Malory:

<i>W</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>F</i>
he behylde sir Lyonell	he beheld Lyonel wold	si congnoist maintenant que
that wolde have slayne hys	haue slayne his broder and	ce est Boors que il amoit
brothir sir Bors which he	knewe syre Bors whiche he	de moult grant amour
loved ryght well	loued ryzt wel	

But when *C* gives the variant *euen songe tyme*, *W* *evynsonge* and *F* *heure de vespres*, the possibility of *heure* dropping out in Malory and reappearing by accident in *C* cannot altogether be ignored.³ Much less uncertain is the series: *chemise blanche* (*F*) > *whyte shert* (*C*) > *whyght sheete* (*W*).⁴ Some notion of where the boundary between certainty and uncertainty should lie may perhaps be derived from a comparison of two groups of quotations, in the first of which the evidence of *F* is just enough to tip the scales in favour of *C*, while in the second an emendation of *W* would fall just below the 'safety line':

<i>W</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>F</i>
that one way defendith the		
that thou ne go <i>that day</i> ⁵	... <i>that way</i>	... que tu n'y entres
I charge the that ... ye	I charge you that ... ye	... se vous estes en lieu que
hyre masse dayly and ye	here masse dayly and ye	vous le puissiés faire
may <i>com thereto</i> ⁶	may doo hit	

¹ MS. Add. 10293, f. 284 a.

² *v. infra*, p. 971.

³ *v. infra*, p. 927.

⁴ *v. infra*, p. 925.

⁵ *v. infra*, loc. cit.

⁶ *v. infra*, p. 833.

(c) $\pi + F$.

Our two main witnesses, then, are π (textual evidence) and F (Malory's sources). In the examples quoted so far each has appeared independently and has sufficed for the reconstruction of the text. But it may happen that while neither is strong enough in itself to supply an emendation, their concurrence would clinch the evidence and change a mere hypothesis into a virtual certainty. To take a simple example, Lady Columbe's reproach to Balin ('whan she aspyed that Launceor was slayne'): *two bodyes thou haste slayne one herte and two hertes in one body*, can be conjecturally emended, on textual grounds, by the insertion of *in* after *slayne*, for it is probable that in some earlier copy *slayne* was spelt *slain*, and *in* fell out by *homoeoteleuton*. But this is a mere conjecture; what makes it acceptable and, indeed, worthy of inclusion in the text, is the fact that in the corresponding place F gives the exact equivalent of the reconstructed reading:

F : deus cuers avés *ochis en un* et deus cors en un

M : two bodyes thou haste *slain in one* and two hertes in one body¹

Another interesting case is the remark *thou hast resembled in to thynges*,² alleged to have been made by Josephe, son of Joseph of Arimathea, to Galahad. The sense clearly requires the insertion of *me* after *resembled*, and it is arguable that the word may have dropped out before *in* owing to the likeness between *m* and *in*. But the emendation would not be certain without the support of the corresponding reading in F : *tu m'as resemblé en deus choses*. On similar grounds, when W writes *ye ar ryght wyse of thes workes*, we can safely replace *workes* by *wordes* because the French has *ceste parolle*.³

The formula $\pi + F = M$ can yield even more striking results: it can help to restore readings absent from both our texts, as in the following two cases:

¹ v. *infra*, p. 69. The meaning of the remark is slightly different in F : 'by killing one heart you have killed two, and by killing one body you have killed two.' In M Lady Columbe says, in substance, that her body must die with her lover's, and so must her heart. From the textual point of view, however, all that matters is that the words *ochis en un* could induce Malory to write *slain in one*.

² v. *infra*, p. 1035.

³ v. *infra*, p. 989.

C	W	F	M
so these thre felawes and they thre were there no mo	so thes three knyght and these three elles were no mo	et avecques ces troiz <i>demourerent</i> lez trois compaignons	so <i><there abode></i> thes three knyght(es) and these three; elles were no mo ¹
in suche payne and in suche anguysshe I haue ben longe	in such payne and in such angwysh as I have suffird longe	en telle paine et en telle angoisse que <i>nus aultres homs ne la pourroit souffrir longuement</i>	in such payne and in such angwysh as I have <i><no man elles myght haue></i> suf- fird longe ²

In the first of these two passages *F* supplies the verb *demourerent* for which there is only one normal equivalent in *M*: *abode*. π , on the other hand, suggests a reason for its disappearance: the word *abode* would most easily be lost if it belonged to a phrase the first three letters of which were identical with the first three letters of the next word (*thes*). Hence the reconstructed reading: *so there abode thes three*, &c. In the second passage there is a characteristic discrepancy between *C* and *W*: while the latter accurately reproduces an incomplete sentence, the former tries to restore the sense by deleting the word *as*. *F* shows, however, that *as* belongs to the original construction, and that a vital phrase corresponding to *nus aultres homs ne porroit* must have dropped out after the word *have*. But since on grounds of π it is reasonable to assume that that phrase disappeared because it ended with the word *have*, the conclusion naturally suggests itself that it read *no man elles myght have*.

A sentence already referred to in passing³ may be quoted as a last example. In relating Lancelot's adventures in the quest of the Holy Grail, Caxton tells us (Book XV) that as Lancelot rode through a deep valley he saw a *ryuer and an hyhe montayn*. *W*'s reading is *a ryver and an mortays*.⁴ *C*, as usual, seems more plausible, but only superficially so, for while 'high mountain' may be more intelligible than *mortays*, there is no justification for it in the context, and the sudden appearance of a mountain at this point is totally inexplicable. *F* again provides the clue. It says: *Et lors regarda devant lui et voit l'iaue grant que on apeloit Marcoise, qui la forest departoit en deus parties*.⁵ The whole process at once becomes clear:

¹ v. *infra*, p. 1028.

² v. *infra*, loc. cit.

³ v. *supra*, pp. lxxxviii-ix.

⁴ v. *infra*, p. 934.

⁵ MS. B.N. fr. 120, f. 545^r col. 1.

Malory must have written *a ryver that hyght Mortays*; one of his early copyists misread *that hyght* as *Ʒ an hyghe*, and the resulting phrase *Ʒ an hyghe mortays* was contracted in *W* to *Ʒ an mortays*. Caxton, unable as he was to understand the word *mortays*, ingeniously replaced it by the only palaeographical equivalent that could go with the adjective *hyghe*. Thanks to *F* we can at long last get rid of that adjective, of the misplaced mountain, and of the mysterious object called *mortays*—hitherto one of the unsolved puzzles of the Grail.

3. *The Present Edition*

Since we do not profess to be able to reconstruct the original work in its entirety, but merely to do the best we can with one of its extant copies, the choice of our base text will imply no outright recognition of its excellence. The principles which should govern such a choice have been admirably formulated by Joseph Bédier in the Introduction to his edition of the *Lai de l'Ombre*:

Nous avons choisi, entre nos sept manuscrits, le manuscrit *A*, pour servir de «base» à notre édition. Ce n'est nullement que nous le tenions pour le plus voisin de l'original, puisque, comme nous l'avons vu, il se peut fort bien que *D*, ou *E*, représente le dernier état du texte, tel qu'il plut à Jean Renart de le constituer. Si nous avons choisi le manuscrit *A*, le précieux manuscrit 837 de la Bibliothèque nationale, c'est de façon tout empirique, et simplement parce que, offrant d'ailleurs un texte à l'ordinaire très sensé et très cohérent, et des formes grammaticales très françaises (à part quelques «picardismes»), et une orthographe très simple et très régulière, il est, entre nos sept manuscrits, celui qui présente le moins souvent des leçons individuelles, celui par conséquent qu'on est le moins souvent tenté de corriger. L'ayant une fois choisi, nous avons pris le parti d'en respecter autant que possible les leçons.

It is on similar grounds that the Winchester MS. has been adopted for the present edition of Malory's works: not because it is in every respect the nearest to the original, but because it is so in some parts, and because as long as absolute 'truthfulness' is not aimed at, the less well known of the two versions, which is at least as reliable as the other, is as fair as any choice can be.

L'ayant une fois choisi, nous avons pris le parti d'en respecter autant que possible les leçons. This again is largely true of the present edition, though I may have placed on the words *autant que possible* a somewhat wider interpretation than that which Bédier had in mind. The principle I have endeavoured to follow resolves itself into two simple propositions: (*a*) that readings which can be shown to result from scribal errors or those which are condemned on grounds of external evidence must be emended; and (*b*) that all the rest, good or bad, 'probable' or 'improbable' must be retained and, as far as possible, elucidated. The astonishing fewness of what in the last analysis may be termed *loci desperati* in a text established in this fashion is another indication that the conservative use of the editor's 'discriminating faculty' does little injustice to the author and imposes no undue burden on the reader.

To enable the reader to see at a glance the emendations I have made, I have distinguished them from the body of the text by placing in square brackets the readings borrowed from Caxton without the support of *F*, in half brackets (*[]*) Caxton's readings confirmed by *F*, and in caret brackets (*< >*) the words and letters which occur neither in Caxton nor in the Winchester text. Square brackets have also been used for the *lacunae* in *W* (ff. 1-8, 32-3, 347-8, and 485-92) supplied from *C*, and for matter borrowed from *C* to fill the gaps in some of the torn pages. Wherever the emendations are not self-explanatory, the reasons for them will generally be found either in the critical apparatus or in the *Commentary*.

The critical apparatus is the product of a collation of the Winchester MS. with Caxton's edition, of both these texts with Malory's sources, of the two copies of Caxton's edition with one another, and of H. O. Sommer's edition with the Rylands copy. The material it contains falls into four main categories: (*a*) readings from the Winchester MS. not included in the text; (*b*) Caxton's readings, exclusive of minor differences of spelling and wording; (*c*) readings from Malory's sources which have a bearing upon the reconstruction of his text; and (*d*) variants of the two extant copies of Caxton's edition. Some of Sommer's misprints and all the

errors in Whittaker's facsimiles have also been recorded.¹ Caxton's readings which are either clearly preferable to those of the base text or likely to throw some light upon it are marked with an asterisk (*). The dagger (†) is used to denote corrupt variants. All quotations are introduced by line-numbers and by the following abbreviated references:

C = Caxton's edition.

F = Malory's French sources as represented by the extant MSS.

MA = The alliterative *Morte Arthure* (Thornton MS.).

P = The Pierpont Morgan copy of *C*.

R = The John Rylands copy of *C*.

S = Sommer's edition of *R*.

W = The Winchester MS.

Wh = Whittaker's facsimiles in *R*.

The present edition is the first attempt to produce Malory's text in the old spelling with modern punctuation and word-division. Certain features of fifteenth-century orthography which have no interest except a purely palaeographical one have, however, been removed: the modern use of *i*, *j*, *u*, *v*, and of capitals has been adopted throughout,² contractions and numerals have been expanded, *u*'s occasionally interpreted as *y*'s and vice versa, *þ* has been transcribed as *th*, and *ȝ* as *y*, *gh*, or *z*, according to its position in the word. The expansions, like the emended readings based on Caxton, follow as far as possible the normal spelling of the manuscript, but where the latter is inconsistent the convenience of the modern reader has been taken into account. Thus the sign *ſ* has been interpreted as *es* and the sign *er* as *er*,³ despite the fact that the scribes of the Winchester MS. prefer as a rule *is* and *ir*. The acute accent has been used in polysyllabic words to distinguish the vocal *e* from the mute.

Contrary to the practice which used to prevail in editions of old texts, light punctuation has been adopted, particularly

¹ The variants are quoted with as much of the context as is necessary to find the corresponding reading in the text. For example, if the text reads *longe hit was or he myght welde hymselff* and Caxton has in addition the word *ever*, his variant is quoted as *or ever he*. The words *see note* refer to the *Commentary*.

² Except in such words as *sir*, *kynge*, and *quene*.

³ Except in the word *sir*.

in the case of noun or adjective clauses introduced by *who*, *which*, *that*, *what*, *where*, and the like. But wherever punctuation could clarify the construction it has been resorted to liberally, and no commas have been spared before adverb-clauses introduced by conjunctions signifying cause or purpose (e.g. *that* = 'so that', *for*, *because*, &c.).

In a text such as Malory's, punctuation can do more than clarify his meaning: it can help to bring out the rhythm and movement of his prose. The frequent occurrence of compound sentences strung together by innumerable *and*'s is apt to obscure the fact that Malory's favourite period is a short one, falling into not more than three parts, and that, although he sometimes uses a wider pattern, his natural preference is for crisp and compact construction. Punctuation can make this apparent and so reveal the real cadence of Malory's sentences, a cadence which achieves point and appeal and escapes the tendency to 'watering down', so prominent in medieval prose:

Than they fewtred their spearis in their restis and com togidirs as muche as their horsis myght dryve. And the Irysh knyght smote Balyne on the shyld that all wente to shyvers of hys spere. And Balyne smote hym agayne thorow the shyld, and the hawbirk perysshed, and so bore hym thorow the body and over the horse crowper; and anone turned hys horse feresely and drew oute hys swerde, and wyst nat that he had slayne hym. (p. 69.)

Than sir Launcelot unbarred the dore, and with hys lyfte honde he hylde hit opyn a lytyll, that but one man myght com in at onys. And so there cam strydyng a good knyght, a much man and a large, and hys name was called sir Collgrevaunce of Goore. And he wyth a swerde streke at sir Launcelot myghtyly, and so he put asyde the streke, and gaff hym such a buffette uppon the helmet that he felle grovelyng dede wythin the chambir dore. (p. 1167.)

Another characteristic of Malory's style—the substitution of dialogue for narrative—can be displayed by the even simpler method of paragraphing. The unfortunate habit of printing Malory's text in solid blocks of prose with scarcely more than one fresh line on each page has caused modern readers to lose sight of this vital aspect of his work. For my part I had no hesitation in giving it, as far as possible, the appearance of a modern novel and avoiding at all costs that

of a learned treatise. How else, indeed, could one adequately render the brisk exchange of repartees in such passages as the dialogue between Sir Gareth and the haughty lady who resents his acts of heroism,¹ or the well-known scene of Gawain's despair at the discovery of his brothers' death?

'But where are my brethirn?' seyde sir Gawayne, 'I mervayle that I se nat of them.'

Than seyde that man, 'Truly, sir Gaherys and sir Gareth be slayne'.

'Jesu deffende,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'for all thys worlde I wolde nat that they were slayne, and in especiall my good brothir sir Gareth.'

'Sir,' seyde the man, 'he ys slayne, and that ys grete pité.'

'Who slew hym?' seyde sir Gawayne.

'Sir Launcelot,' seyde the man, 'slew hem both.'

'That may I nat believe,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'that ever he slew my good brother sir Gareth, for I dare say my brothir loved hym bettir than me and all hys brethirn and the kynge bothe. Also I dare sey, an sir Launcelot had desyred my brothir sir Gareth with hym, he wolde have ben with hym ayenste the kynge and us all. And therefore I may never belyeve that sir Launcelot slew my brethern.'

'Veryly, sir,' seyde the man, 'hit ys noysed that he slew hym.'

'Alas,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'now ys my joy gone!'

For reasons explained above² I have abandoned the traditional general heading of Malory's works—*Le Morte Darthur*—and have given each work the title which Malory himself has assigned to it in his colophon. As a result, the present edition, unlike all previous ones, appears in the form of eight separate romances. I have not, however, thought it necessary to follow their chronological sequence, and have placed them in the order in which they are found in Caxton's edition and in the Winchester MS.

I have naturally ignored Caxton's division into books and chapters, but have divided Malory's five longest romances—*The Tale of King Arthur*, *The Book of Sir Tristram*, *The Tale of the Sankgreal*, *The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, and *The Morte Arthur*—into sections which in most cases correspond to subdivisions indicated in the text. Caxton's *Table of Rubrysshe* has been split accordingly and used as a substitute for the table of contents at the beginning of each section. To facilitate reference to Caxton's edition

¹ v. *infra*, pp. 305-6.

² v. *supra*, pp. xxix-xxxv.

his book-numbers appear at the top of each page, and his chapter-numbers are given in brackets in the outer margin.

Caxton's Preface is reproduced here in full: not merely as the finest and in many ways the soundest essay ever written on the *Morte Darthur*, but as a fitting and indeed indispensable prelude to the noble and 'joyous' book.

CAXTON'S PREFACE

AFTER that I had accomplisshed and fynysshed dyvers [Sig. Aij] hystories as wel of contemplacyon as of other hystorial and worldly actes of grete conquerours and prynces, and also certeyn bookes of ensaumples and doctryne, many noble and dyvers gentylmen of thys royaume of Englonde camen and demaunded me many and oftymes wherfore that I have not do made and enprynte the noble hystorie of the Saynt Greal and of the moost renommed Crysten kyng, fyrst and chyef of the thre best Crysten, and worthy, kyng Arthur, whyche ought moost to be remembred emonge us 10 Englysshemen tofore al other Crysten kynges.

For it is notoyrly knowen thorough the unyversal world that there been nine worthy and the best that ever were, that is to wete, thre Paynymys, thre Jewes, and thre Crysten men. As for the Paynymys, they were tofore the Incarnacyon 15 of Cryst, whiche were named, the fyrst Hector of Troye, of whome th'ystorye is comen bothe in balade and in prose, the second Alysaunder the Grete, and the thyrd Julyus Cezar, Emperour of Rome, of whome th'ystories ben wel knowen and had. And as for the thre Jewes whyche also 20 were tofore th'Yncarnacyon of our Lord, of whome the fyrst was Duc Josué whyche brought the chyldren of Israhel into the londe of byheste, the second Davyd, kyng of Jerusalem, and the thyrd Judas Machabeus, of these thre the Byble reherceth al theyr noble hystories and actes. And 25 sythe the sayd Incarnacyon have ben thre noble Crysten men stalled and admytted thorough the unyversal world into the nombre of the nine beste and worthy, of whome was fyrst the noble Arthur, whos noble actes I purpose to wryte in thys present book here folowyng. The second was 30 Charlemayn, or Charles the Grete, of whome th'ystorye is had in many places, bothe in Frensshe and Englysshe; and the thyrd and last was Godefray of Boloyn, of whos actes and lyf I made a book unto th'excellent prynce and kyng of noble memorye, kyng Edward the Fourth. 35

The sayd noble jentylmen instantly requyred me t'em-
 prynte th'ystorye of the sayd noble kyng and conquerour
 kyng Arthur and of his knyghtes, wyth th'ystorye of the
 Saynt Greal and of the deth and endyng of the sayd Arthur,
 5 affermyng that I ought rather t'enprynte his actes and noble
 feates than of Godefroye of Boloynes or any of the other eyght,
 consydering that he was a man borne wythin this royaume and
 kyng and emperour of the same, and that there ben in
 Frensshe dyvers and many noble volumes of his actes, and
 10 also of his knyghtes.

To whome I answerd that dyvers men holde oppynyon
 that there was no suche Arthur and that alle suche bookes
 as been maad of hym ben but fayned and fables, bycause
 that somme cronycles make of hym no mencyon ne remembre
 15 hym noothyng, ne of his knyghtes.

Wherto they answerd, and one in specyal sayd, that in
 hym that shold say or thynke that there was never suche a
 kyng callyd Arthur myght wel be aretted grete folye and
 blyndenesse, for he sayd that there were many evydences of
 20 the contrarye. Fyrst, ye may see his sepulture in the
 monasterye of Glastyngburye; and also in Polycronycon, in
 the fifth book, the syxte chappytre, and in the seventh book,
 the twenty-thyrd chappytre, where his body was buried, and
 after founden and translated into the sayd monasterye. Ye
 25 shal se also in th'ystorye of Bochas, in his book DE CASU
 PRINCIPUM, parte of his noble actes, and also of his falle.
 Also Galfrydus, in his Brutyshe book, recounteth his lyf.
 And in dyvers places of Englund many remembraunces ben
 yet of hym and shall remayne perpetuelly, and also of his
 30 knyghtes: fyrst, in the abbey of Westmestre, at Saynt
 Edwardes shryne, remayneth the prynte of his seal in reed
 waxe, closed in beryll, in whych is wryton PATRICIUS
 ARTHURUS BRITANNIE GALLIE GERMANIE DACIE IMPERATOR;
 item, in the castel of Dover ye may see Gauwayns skulle and
 35 Cradoks mantel; at Wynchester, the Rounde Table; in
 other places Launcelottes swerde and many other thynges.

Thenne, al these thynges consydered, there can no man
 resonably gaynsaye but there was a kyng of thys lande named

6 *S* only the
 35 *S* mantle

13 but *not in S*

18 *S* kynge

21 *C* Glastyugburye

Arthur. For in al places, Crysten and hethen, he is reputed and taken for one of the nine worthy, and the fyrst of the thre Crysten men. And also he is more spoken of beyonde the see, moo bookes made of his noble actes, than there be in Englund; as wel in Duche, Ytalyen, Spaynysshe, and Grekysshe, as in Frensshe. And yet of record remayne in wytnesse of hym in Wales, in the toune of Camelot, the grete stones and mervayllous werkys of yron lyeng under the grounde, and ryal vautes, [*sig. Aiiij*] which dyvers now lyvyng hath seen. Wherfor it is a mervayl why he is no more renowned in his owne contreye, sauf onelye it accordeth to the word of God, whyche sayth that no man is accept for a prophete in his owne contreye.

Thenne, al these thynges forsayd alledged, I coude not wel denye but that there was suche a noble kyng named Arthur, and reputed one of the nine worthy, and fyrst and chyef of the Cristen men. And many noble volumes be made of hym and of his noble knyghtes in Frensshe, which I have seen and redde beyonde the see, which been not had in our maternal tongue. But in Walsse ben many, and also in Frensshe, and somme in Englysshe, but nowher nygh alle. Wherfore, suche as have late ben drawn oute bryeffly into Englysshe, I have, after the symple connyng that God hath sente to me, under the favour and correctyon of al noble lordes and gentylmen, enprysed to enprynte a book of the noble hystories of the sayd kynge Arthur and of certeyn of his knyghtes, after a cople unto me delyverd, whyche cople syr Thomas Malorye dyd take oute of certeyn bookes of Frensshe and reduced it into Englysshe.

And I, accordyng to my cople, have doon sette it in enprynte to the entente that noble men may see and lerne the noble actes of chyvalrye, the jentyl and vertuuous dedes that somme knyghtes used in tho dayes, by whyche they came to honour, and how they that were vycious were punysshed and ofte put to shame and rebuke; humbly bysechyng al noble lordes and ladyes wyth al other estates, of what estate or degree they been of, that shal see and rede in this sayd book and werke, that they take the good and honest actes in their remembraunce, and to folowe the same;

wherin they shalle fynde many joyous and playsaunt hystories and noble and renommed actes of humanyté, gentylnesse, and chyvalryes. For herein may be seen noble chyvalrye, curtosye, humanyté, frendlynesse, hardynesse, 5 love, frendshyp, cowardyse, murdre, hate, vertue, and synne. Doo after the good and leve the evyl, and it shal brynge you to good fame and renommee.

And for to passe the tyme thys book shal be plesaunte to rede in, but for to gyve fayth and byleve that al is trewe 10 that is conteyned herin, ye be at your lyberté. But al is wryton for our doctryne, and for to beware that we falle not to vyce ne synne, but t'exersyse and folowe vertu, by whyche we may come and atteyne to good fame and renommé in thys lyf, and after thys shorte and transytorye lyf to come unto 15 everlastyng blysse in heven; the whyche He graunte us that reygne in heven, the Blessyd Trynyté. AMEN.

Thenne, to procede forth in thys sayd book, whyche I dyrecte unto alle noble prynces, lordes, and ladyes, gentylmen or gentylwymmen, that desyre to rede or here redde of 20 the noble and joyous hystorie of the grete conquerour and excellent kyng, kyng Arthur, somtyme kyng of thys noble royalme thenne callyd Brytayne, I, Wylliam Caxton, symple persone, present thys book folowyng whyche I have enprynged t'enprynte: and treateth of the noble actes, feates 25 of armes of chyvalrye, prowessse, hardynesse, humanyté, love, curtosye, and veray gentylnesse, wyth many wonderful hystories and adventures.

And for to understonde bryefly the contente of thys volume I have devyded it into twenty-one bookes, and every 30 book chapytred, as hereafter shal by Goddes grace folowe:

The fyrst book shal treate how Utherpendragon gate the noble conquerour kyng Arthur, and conteyneth xxviii chappytres.

The second book treateth of Balyn, the noble knyght, and conteyneth xix chappytres.

35 The thyrd book treateth of the maryage of kyng Arthur to Quene Guenever, wyth other maters, and conteyneth fyftene chappytres.

The fourth book, how Merlyn was assotted, and of warre maad to kyng Arthur, and conteyneth xxix chappytres.

The fyfthe book treateth of the conqueste of Lucius th'emperour and conteyneth xii chappytres.

The syxthe book treateth of syr Launcelot and syr Lyonel and mervayllous adventures and conteyneth xviii chapytres.

The seventh book treateth of a noble knyght called syr Gareth 5 and named by syr Kaye 'Beaumayns' and conteyneth xxxvi chapytres.

The eyght book treateth of the byrthe of syr Trystram, the noble knyght, and of hys actes and conteyneth xli chapytres.

The ix book treateth of a knyght named by syr Kaye 'Le Cote 10 Male Taylle' and also of syr Trystram and conteyneth xliiij [sig. Aiiij] chapytres.

The x book treateth of syr Trystram and other mervayllous adventures and conteyneth lxxxviii chappytres.

The xi book treateth of syr Launcelot and syr Galahad and 15 conteyneth xiiij chappytres.

The xii book treateth of syr Launcelot and his madnesse and conteyneth xiiij chappytres.

The xiii book treateth how Galahad came fyrst to kyng Arthurs courte, and the quest, how the Sangreall was begonne, and conteyneth 20 xx chapytres.

The xiiij book treateth of the queste of the Sangreal and conteyneth x chapytres.

The xv book treateth of syr Launcelot and conteyneth vi 25 chapytres.

The xvi book treateth of syr Bors and syr Lyonel, his brother, and conteyneth xvii chapytres.

The xvii book treateth of the Sangreal and conteyneth xxiii chapytres.

The xviii book treateth of syr Launcelot and the quene and con- 30 teyneth xxv chapytres.

The xix book treateth of quene Guenever and Launcelot and conteyneth xiii chapytres.

The xx book treateth of the pyteous deth of Arthur and conteyn- 35 eth xxii chapytres.

The xxi book treateth of his last departyng, and how syr Launce- lot came to revenge his dethe, and conteyneth xiii chapytres.

The somme is twenty-one bookes whyche conteyne the somme of fyve hondred and seven chapytres, as more playnly shal folowe hereafter. 40

THE TALE

OF

KING ARTHUR

[*Winchester MS.*, ff° 9^r-70^v;
Caxton, Books I-IV]

I

M E R L I N

[*Winchester MS.*, ff^o 9^r-22^r;
Caxton, Book I]

CAXTON'S RUBRICS

1. Fyrst, how Uther Pendragon sente for the duke of Cornewayl and Igrayne his wyf, and of their departyng sodeynly* ageyn.
2. How Uther Pendragon made warre on the duke of Cornewayl and how by the moyane of Merlyn he laye by the duchesse and gate Arthur.
- 3, 4, and 5. Of the byrthe of kyng Arthur and of his nourytur, and of the deth of kyng Uter Pendragon, and how Arthur was chosen kyng, and of wondres and mervaylles of a swerde taken out of a stone by the sayd Arthur.
6. How kyng Arthur pulled oute the swerde dyvers tymes.
7. How kyng Arthur was crowned and how he made offycers.
8. How kyng Arthur helde in Wales at a Pentecost a grete feest and what kynges and lordes came to his feste.
9. Of the fyrst warre that kyng Arthur had and how he wanne the felde.
10. How Merlyn counceyllled kyng Arthur to sende for kyng Ban and kyng Bors, and of theyr counceyl taken for the warre.
11. Of a grete tornoye made by kynge Arthur and the two kynges Ban and Bors, and how they wente over the see.
12. How eleven kynges gadred† a grete hoost ayenst kyng Arthur.
13. Of a dreame of the Kyng wyth the Hondred Knyghtes.
14. How the eleven kynges wyth theyr hoost fought ayens Arthur and his hoost, and many grete feates of the warre.
15. Yet of the same batayll.
- 17.‡ Yet more of the said batayll, and how it was ended by Merlyn.
18. How kyng Arthur, kyng Ban and kyng Bors rescowed kyng Leodegraunce, and other incy dentes.
19. How kyng Arthur rode to Garlyon [*sic*] and of his dreame, and how he sawe the questyng beest.
20. How kyng Pellynore took Arthurs hors and folowed the questyng beest, and how Merlyn mette wyth Arthur.
21. How Ulfyus apeched quene Igrayne, Arthurs moder, of treason, and how a knyght came and desyred to have the deth of hys mayster revengyd.
22. How Gryflet was made knyght and justed with a knyght.
23. How twelve knyghtes came from Rome and axed truage for thys londe of Arthur, and how Arthur faught wyth a knyght.

* S sodeynly

† S garded

‡ C gives no rubric for Ch. 16

- „ 24. How Merlyn saved Arthurs lyf and threwe an enchaunte-
ment upon kyng Pellynore and made hym to slepe.
- „ 25. How Arthur by the meane of Merlyn gate Excalybur, hys
swerde, of the Lady of the Lake.
- „ 27.*How tydynges cam to Arthur that kyng Ryons had
overcome eleven kynges, and how he desyred Arthus berde
to purfyl his mantel.
- „ 28. How al the chyldren were sente fore that were borne on
May day, and how Mordred was saved.

* *C omits 26*

[HIT befel in the dayes of Uther Pendragon, when he was *Caxton*,
kyнге of all Englonde and so regned, that there was a I (1)
myghty duke in Cornewaill that helde warre ageynst hym
long tyme, and the duke was called the duke of Tyntagil.
And so by meanes kyнге Uther send for this duk chargyng 5
hym to brynge his wyf with hym, for she was called a fair
lady and a passyng wyse, and her name was called Igrayne.

So whan the duke and his wyf were comyn unto the
kyнге, by the meanes of grete lordes they were accorded
bothe. The kyнге lyked and loved this lady wel, and he 10
made them grete chere out of mesure and desyred to have
lyen by her, but she was a passyng good woman and wold
not assente unto the kyнге. And thenne she told the duke her
husband and said,

‘I suppose that we were sente for that I shold be dis- 15
honoured. Wherfor, husband, I counceille yow that we
departe from hens sodenly, that we maye ryde all nyghte
unto oure owne castell.’

And in lyke wyse as she saide so they departed, that
neyther the kyнге nor none of his counceill were ware of 20
their departyng. Also soone as kyng Uther knewe of theire
departyng soo sodenly, he was wonderly wrothe; thenne he
called to hym his pryvy counceille and told them of the
sodeyne departyng of the duke and his wyf. Thenne they
avysed the kyнге to send for the duke and his wyf by a 25
grete charge: ‘And yf he wille not come at your somons,
thenne may ye do your best; thenne have ye cause to make
myghty werre upon hym.’

Soo that was done, and the messagers hadde their ansuers;
and that was thys, shortly, that neyther he nor his wyf wold 30
not come at hym. Thenne was the kyng wonderly wroth;
and thenne the kyng sente hym playne word ageyne and
badde hym be redy and stuffe hym and garnysshe hym, for
within forty dayes he wold fetch hym oute of the byggest
castell that he hath.

Whanne the duke hadde thys warnyng anone he wente 35
and furnysshed and garnyssed two stronge castels of his,
of the whiche the one hyght Tyntagil and the other castel

hyght Terrabyl. So his wyf dame Igrayne he putte in the castell of Tyntagil, and hymself he putte in the castel of Terrabyl, the whiche had many yssues and posternes oute. Thenne in all haste came Uther with a grete hoost and leyde
 5 a syege aboute the castel of Terrabil, and ther he pyght many pavelions. And there was grete warre made on bothe parties and moche peple slayne.

Thenne for pure angre and for grete love of fayr Igrayne the kyng Uther felle seke. So came to the kyng Uther syre
 10 Ulfius, a noble knyght, and asked the kyng why he was seke.

'I shall telle the,' said the kyng. 'I am seke for angre and for love of fayre Igrayne, that I may not be hool.'

'Wel, my lord,' said syre Ulfius, 'I shal seke Merlyn and he shalle do yow remedy, that youre herte shal be pleasyd.'

15 So Ulfius departed and by adventure he mette Merlyn in a beggars aray, and ther Merlyn asked Ulfius whome he soughte, and he said he had lytyl ado to telle hym.

'Well,' saide Merlyn, 'I knowe whome thou sekest, for thou sekest Merlyn; therfore seke no ferther, for I am he. And
 20 yf kyng Uther wille wel rewarde me and be sworne unto me to fulfille my desyre, that shall be his honour and profite more than myn, for I shalle cause hym to have alle his desyre.'

'Alle this wyll I undertake,' said Ulfius, 'that ther shalle be nothyng resonable but thow shalt have thy desyre.'

25 'Well,' said Merlyn, 'he shall have his entente and desyre, and therefore,' saide Merlyn, 'ryde on your wey, for I wille not be long behynde.'

(2) Thenne Ulfius was glad and rode on more than a paas tyll that he came to kyng Uther Pendragon and told hym
 30 he had met with Merlyn.

'Where is he?' said the kyng.

'Sir,' said Ulfius, 'he wille not dwelle long.'

Therwithal Ulfius was ware where Merlyn stood at the porche of the pavelions dore, and thenne Merlyn was
 35 bounde to come to the kyng. Whan kyng Uther sawe hym he said he was welcome.

'Syr,' said Merlyn, 'I knowe al your hert every dele. So ye wil be sworn unto me, as ye be a true kyng enoynted, to fulfille my desyre, ye shal have your desyre.'

40 Thenne the kyng was sworne upon the four Evangelistes.

'Syre,' said Merlyn, 'this is my desyre: the first nyght that ye shal lye by Igrayne ye shal gete a child on her; and whan that is borne, that it shall be delyverd to me for to nourisshe thereas I wille have it, for it shal be your worship and the childis availle as mykel as the child is worth.'

'I wylle wel,' said the kynge, 'as thow wilt have it.'

'Now make you redy,' said Merlyn. 'This nyght ye shalle lye with Igrayne in the castel of Tyntigayll. And ye shalle be lyke the duke her husband, Ulfyus shal be lyke syre Brastias, a knyghte of the dukes, and I will be lyke a knyghte that hyghte syr Jordanus, a knyghte of the dukes. But wayte ye make not many questions with her nor her men, but saye ye are diseased, and soo hye yow to bedde and ryse not on the morne tyll I come to yow, for the castel of Tyntygaill is but ten myle hens.'

Soo this was done as they devysed. But the duke of Tyntigail aspyed hou the kyng rode fro the syege of Tarabil. And therfor that nyghte he yssued oute of the castel at a posterne for to have distressid the kynges hooste, and so thorowe his owne yssue the duke hymself was slayne or ever the kynge cam at the castel of Tyntigail. So after the deth of the duke kyng Uther lay with Igrayne more than thre houres after his deth, and begat on her that nygh(t) Arthur; and or day cam, Merlyn cam to the kyng and bad hym make hym redy, and so he kist the lady Igrayne and departed in all hast. But whan the lady herd telle of the duke her husband, and by all record he was dede or ever kyng Uther came to her, thenne she merveilled who that myghte be that laye with her in lykenes of her lord. So she mourned pryvely and held hir pees.

Thenne alle the barons by one assent prayd the kynge of accord betwixe the lady Igrayne and hym. The kynge gaf hem leve, for fayne wold he have ben accorded with her; soo the kyng put alle the trust in Ulfyus to entrete bitwene them. So by the entreté at the last the kyng and she met togyder.

'Now wille we doo wel,' said Ulfyus; 'our kyng is a lusty knyghte and wyveles, and my lady Igrayne is a passynge fair lady; it were grete joye unto us all and hit myghte please the kynge to make her his quene.'

Unto that they all well accordyd and meved it to the kynge. And anone lyke a lusty knyghte he assentid therto with good wille, and so in alle haste they were maryed in a mornynge with grete myrthe and joye.

5 And kynge Lott of Lowthean and of Orkenay thenne wedded Margawse that was Gaweyns moder, and kynge Nentres of the land of Garlot wedded Elayne: al this was done at the request of kynge Uther. And the thyrd syster, Morgan le Fey, was put to scole in a nonnery, and ther she
10 lerned so moche that she was a grete clerke of nygromancye. And after she was wedded to kynge Uryens of the lond of Gore that was syre Ewayns le Blaunche Maynys fader.

Thenne quene Igrayne waxid dayly gretter and gretter. So it befel after within half a yere, as kyng Uther lay by his
15 quene, he asked hir by the feith she ought to hym whos was the child within her body. Thenne was she sore abashed to yeve ansuer.

'Desmaye you not,' said the kyng, 'but telle me the trouthe, and I shall love you the better, by the feythe of my body!'

20 'Syre,' saide she, 'I shalle telle you the trouthe. The same nyghte that my lord was dede, the houre of his deth as his knyghtes record, ther came into my castel of Tyntigaill a man lyke my lord in speche and in countenaunce, and two knyghtes with hym in lykenes of his two knyghtes Barcias
25 and Jordans, and soo I went unto bed with hym as I ought to do with my lord; and the same nyght, as I shal ansuer unto God, this child was begoten upon me.'

'That is trouthe,' saide the kynge, 'as ye say, for it was I myself that cam in the lykenesse. And therfor desmay you not,
30 for I am fader to the child,' and ther he told her alle the cause how it was by Merlyns counceil. Thenne the quene made grete joye whan she knewe who was the fader of her child.

Sone come Merlyn unto the kyng and said, 'Syr, ye must purvey yow for the nourisshyng of your child.'

35 'As thou wolt,' said the kyng, 'be it.'

'Wel,' said Merlyn, 'I knowe a lord of yours in this land that is a passyng true man and a feithful, and he shal have the nourysshynge of your child; and his name is sir Ector, and he is a lord of fair lyvelode in many partyes in Englonde
40 and Walys. And this lord, sir Ector, lete hym be sent for

for to come and speke with you, and desyre hym yourself as he loveth you that he will put his owne child to nourisshyng to another woman and that his wyf nourisshe yours. And whan the child is borne lete it be delyverd to me at yonder pryvy posterne uncrystned.'

So like as Merlyn devysed it was done. And whan syre Ector was come he made fyaunce to the kyng for to nourisshe the child lyke as the kynge desyred, and there the kyng graunted syr Ector grete rewardys. Thenne when the lady was delyverd the kynge commaunded two knyghtes and two ladyes to take the child bound in a cloth of gold, 'and that ye delyver hym to what poure man ye mete at the posterne yate of the castel.' So the child was delyverd unto Merlyn, and so he bare it forth unto syre Ector and made an holy man to crysten hym and named hym Arthur. And so sir Ectors wyf nouryssed hym with her owne pappe.

Thenne within two yeres kyng Uther felle seke of a grete maladye. And in the meanewhyle hys enemyes usurpped upon hym and dyd a grete bataylle upon his men and slewe many of his peple.

'Sir,' said Merlyn, 'ye may not lye so as ye doo, for ye must to the feld, though ye ryde on an hors-lyttar. For ye shall never have the better of your enemyes but yf your persone be there, and thenne shall ye have the vycory.'

So it was done as Merlyn had devysed, and they caryed the kynge forth in an hors-lyttar with a grete hooste towarde his enemyes, and at Saynt Albons ther mette with the kynge a grete hoost of the North. And that day syre Ulfyus and sir Bracias dyd grete dedes of armes, and kyng Uthers men overcome the northeryn bataylle and slewe many peple and putt the remenaunt to flight; and thenne the kyng retorned unto London and made grete joye of his vycory.

And thenne he fyll passyng sore seke so that thre dayes and thre nyghtes he was specheles; wherfore alle the barons made grete sorow and asked Merlyn what counceill were best.

'There nys none other remedye,' said Merlyn, 'but God wil have his wille. But loke ye al barons be bifore kynge Uther to-morne, and God and I shalle make hym to speke.'

So on the morne alle the barons with Merlyn came tofore the kyng. Thenne Merlyn said aloud unto kyng Uther,

'Syre, shall your sone Arthur be kyng after your dayes of this realme with all the appertenaunce?'

Thenne Uther Pendragon torned hym and said in herynge of them alle,

5 'I gyve hym Gods blissyng and myne, and byd hym pray for my soule, and righteously and worshipfully that he clayme the croune upon forfeiture of my blessing,' and therwith he yelde up the ghost. And thenne was he enterid as longed to a kyng, wherfor the quene, fayre Igrayne, made
10 grete sorowe and alle the barons.

Thenne stood the reame in grete jeopardy long whyle, for every lord that was myghty of men maade hym stronge, and many wende to have ben kyng. Thenne Merlyn wente to the Archebisshop of Caunterbury and counceilled hym
15 for to sende for all the lordes of the reame and alle the gentilmen of armes that they shold to London come by Cristmas upon payne of cursynge, and for this cause, that Jesu, that was borne on that nyghte, that He wold of His grete mercy shewe some myracle, as He was come to be
20 Kyng of mankynde, for to shewe somme myracle who shold be rightwys kyng of this reame. So the Archebisshop by the advys of Merlyn send for alle the lordes and gentilmen of armes that they shold come by Crystmasse even unto London, and many of hem made hem clene of her lyf, that
25 her prayer myghte be the more acceptable unto God.

Soo in the grettest chirch of London—whether it were Powlis or not the Frensshe booke maketh no mencyon—alle the estates were longe or day in the chirche for to praye. And whan matyns and the first masse was done there was
30 sene in the chircheyard ayenst the hyhe aluter a grete stone four square lyke unto a marbel stone, and in myddes therof was lyke an anvylde of stele a foot on hyghe, and theryn stack a fayre swerd naked by the poynt, and letters there were wryten in gold aboute the swerd that saiden thus:
35 'WHOSO PULLETH OUTE THIS SWERD OF THIS STONE AND ANVYLD IS RIGHTWYS KYNGE BORNE OF ALL EN(G)LOND.' Thenne the peple merveilled and told it to the Archebisshop.

'I commande,' said th'Archebisshop, 'that ye kepe yow within your chirche and pray unto God still; that no man
40 touche the swerd tyll the hyhe masse be all done.'

So whan all masses were done all the lordes wente to beholde the stone and the swerd. And whan they sawe the scripture som assayed suche as wold have ben kyng, but none myght stere the swerd nor meve hit.

'He is not here,' said the Archebisshop, 'that shall 5 encheve the swerd, but doubte not, God will make hym knowen. But this is my counceill,' said the Archebisshop, 'that we lete purvey ten knyghtes, men of good fame, and they to kepe this swerd.'

So it was ordeyned, and thenne ther was made a crye that 10 every man shold assay that wold for to wynne the swerd. And upon Newe Yees day the barons lete maake a justes and a tournament, that alle knyghtes that wold juste or tourneye there myght playe. And all this was ordeyned for to kepe the lordes togyders and the comyns, for the Archebisshop 15 trusted that God wold make hym knowe that shold wynne the swerd.

So upon New Yeres day, whan the servyce was done, the barons rode unto the feld, some to juste and som to torney. And so it happed that syre Ector that had grete lyvelode 20 aboute London rode unto the justes, and with hym rode syr Kaynus, his sone, and yong Arthur that was hys nourisshed broder; and syr Kay was made knyght at Alhalowmas afore. So as they rode to the justes ward sir Kay had lost his suerd, for he had lefte it at his faders lodgyng, and so he 25 prayd yong Arthur for to ryde for his swerd.

'I wyll wel,' said Arthur, and rode fast after the swerd.

And whan he cam home the lady and al were out to see the joustyng. Thenne was Arthur wroth and saide to hymself, 'I will ryde to the chircheyard and take the swerd with me 30 that stycketh in the stone, for my broder sir Kay shal not be without a swerd this day.' So whan he cam to the chircheyard sir Arthur alight and tayed his hors to the style, and so he wente to the tent and found no knyghtes there, for they were atte justyng. And so he handled the swerd by the 35 handels, and lightly and fiersly pulled it out of the stone, and took his hors and rode his way untill he came to his broder sir Kay and delyverd hym the swerd.

And as sone as sir Kay saw the swerd he wist wel it was the swerd of the stone, and so he rode to his fader syr Ector 40

and said, 'Sire, loo here is the swerd of the stone, wherfor I must be kyng of thys land.'

When syre Ector beheld the swerd he retorned ageyne and cam to the chirche, and there they alighte al thre and
5 wente into the chirche, and anon he made sir Kay to swere upon a book how he came to that swerd.

'Syr,' said sir Kay, 'by my broder Arthur, for he brought it to me.'

'How gate ye this swerd?' said sir Ector to Arthur.

10 'Sir, I will telle you. When I cam home for my broders swerd I fond nobody at home to delyver me his swerd, and so I thought my broder syr Kay shold not be swerdles, and so I cam hyder egerly and pulled it out of the stone withoute ony payn.'

15 'Found ye ony knyghtes about this swerd?' seid sir Ector.

'Nay,' said Arthur.

'Now,' said sir Ector to Arthur, 'I understande ye must be kyng of this land.'

'Wherefore I?' sayd Arthur, 'and for what cause?'

20 'Sire,' saide Ector, 'for God wille have hit soo, for ther shold never man have drawen oute this swerde but he that shal be rightwys kyng of this land. Now lete me see whether ye can putte the swerd theras it was and pulle hit oute ageyne.'

25 'That is no maystry,' said Arthur, and soo he put it in the stone. Therwithalle sir Ector assayed to pulle oute the swerd and faylled.

(6) 'Now assay,' said syre Ector unto syre Kay. And anon he pulled at the swerd with alle his myghte, but it wold not be.

30 'Now shal ye assay,' said syre Ector to Arthur.

'I wyll wel,' said Arthur, and pulled it out easily.

And therwithalle syre Ector knelyd doune to the erthe and syre Kay.

35 'Allas!' said Arthur, 'myne own dere fader and broder, why knele ye to me?'

'Nay, nay, my lord Arthur, it is not so. I was never your fader nor of your blood, but I wote wel ye are of an hyher blood than I wende ye were,' and thenne syre Ector told hym all how he was bitaken hym for to nourisshe hym and
40 by whoos commandement, and by Merlyns delyveraunce.

Thenne Arthur made grete doole whan he understood that syre Ector was not his fader.

'Sir,' said Ector unto Arthur, 'woll ye be my good and gracious lord when ye are kyng?'

'Els were I to blame,' said Arthur, 'for ye are the man 5 in the world that I am most beholding to, and my good lady and moder your wyf that as wel as her owne hath fostred me and kepte. And yf ever hit be Goddes will that I be kynge as ye say, ye shall desyre of me what I may doo and I shalle not faille yow. God forbede I shold 10 faille yow.'

'Sir,' said sire Ector, 'I will aske no more of yow but that ye wille make my sone, your foster-broder syre Kay, se(n)ceall of alle your landes.'

'That shalle be done,' said Arthur, 'and more, by the feith 15 of my body, that never man shalle have that office but he whyle he and I lyve.'

Therewithall they wente unto the Archebisshop and told hym how the swerd was encheved and by whome. And on twelfth day alle the barons cam thyder and to assay to take 20 the swerd who that wold assay, but there afore hem alle ther myghte none take it out but Arthur. Wherfor ther were many lordes wroth and saide it was grete shame unto them all and the reame to be overgovernyd with a boye of no hyghe blood borne. And so they fell oute at that tyme, that 25 it was put of tyll Candemas, and thenne all the barons shold mete there ageyne, but alwey the ten knyghtes were ordeyned to watche the swerd day and nyght, and so they sette a pavelione over the stone and the swerd, and fyve alwayes watched. 30

Soo at Candalmasse many moo grete lordes came thyder for to have wonne the swerde, but there myghte none pre-vaile. And right as Arthur dyd at Cristmasse he dyd at Candelmasse and pulled oute the swerde easely, wherof the barons were sore agreved and put it of in delay till the hyghe 35 feste of Eester. And as Arthur sped afore so dyd he at Eester. Yet there were some of the grete lordes had indignacion that Arthur shold be kynge, and put it of in a delay tyll the feest of Pentecoste. Thenne the Archebisshop of Caun-terbury by Merlyns provydenche lete purveye thenne of the 40

best knyghtes that they myghte gete, and suche knyghtes as Uther Pendragon loved best and moost trusted in his dayes. And suche knyghtes were put aboute Arthur as syr Bawdewyn of Bretayn, syre Kaynes, syre Ulfyus, syre Barsias; all
 5 these with many other were alweyes about Arthur day and nyghte till the feste of Pentecost.

- (7) And at the feste of Pentecost alle maner of men assayed to pulle at the swerde that wold assay, but none myghte prevaille but Arthur, and he pulled it oute afore all the
 10 lordes and comyns that were there. Wherefore alle the comyns cryed at ones,

‘We wille have Arthur unto our kyng! We wille put hym no more in delay, for we all see that it is Goddes wille that he shalle be our kynge, and who that holdeth ageynst it
 15 we wille slee hym.’ And therewithall they knelyd at ones both ryche and poure and cryed Arthur mercy bycause they had delayed hym so longe. And Arthur foryaf hem and took the swerd bitwene both his handes and offred it upon the aulter where the Archebisshop was, and so was he made
 20 knyghte of the best man that was there.

And so anon was the coronacyon made, and ther was he sworne unto his lordes and the comyns for to be a true kyng, to stand with true justyce fro thens forth the dayes of this lyf. Also thenne he made alle lordes that helde of the croune
 25 to come in and to do servyce as they oughte to doo. And many complayntes were made unto sir Arthur of grete wronges that were done syn the dethe of kyng Uther, of many londes that were bereved lordes, knyghtes, ladyes, and gentilmen; wherfor kyng Arthur maade the londes to
 30 be yeven ageyne unto them that oughte hem.

Whanne this was done that the kyng had stablisshed alle the countreyes aboute London, thenne he lete make syr Kay sencial of Englund, and sir Baudewyn of Bretayne was made constable, and sir Ulfyus was made chamberlayn, and sire
 35 Brastias was maade wardeyn to wayte upon the Northe fro Trent forwardes, for it was that tyme the most party the kynges enemyes. But within fewe yeres after Arthur wan alle the North, Scotland and alle that were under their obeis-
 saunce, also Walys; a parte of it helde ayenst Arthur, but
 40 he overcam hem al as he dyd the remenaunt thurgh the

noble prowess of hymself and his knyghtes of the Round Table.

Thenne the kyng remeved into Walys and lete crye a grete feste, that it shold be holdyn at Pentecost after the incoronacion of hym at the cyté of Carlyon. Unto the fest come kyng Lott of Lowthean and of Orkeney with fyve hondred knyghtes with hym; also ther come to the feste kyng Uryens of Gore with four hondred knyghtes with hym; also ther come to that feeste kyng Nayntres of Garloth with seven hundred knyghtes with hym; also ther came to the feest the kyng of Scotland with sixe honderd knyghtes with hym, and he was but a yong man. Also ther came to the feste a kyng that was called the Kyng with the Honderd Knyghtes, but he and his men were passyng wel bisene at al poyntes; also ther cam the kyng of Cardos with fyve honderd knyghtes.

And kyng Arthur was glad of their comynge, for he wende that al the kynges and knyghtes had come for grete love and to have done hym worship at his feste, wherfor the kyng made grete joye and sente the kynges and knyghtes grete presentes. But the kynges wold none receyve, but rebuked the messagers shamefully and said they had no joye to receyve no yeftes of a berdles boye that was come of lowe blood, and sente hym word they wold none of his yeftes, but that they were come to gyve hym yeftes with hard swerdys betwixt the neck and the sholders; and therfore they came thyder, so they told to the messagers playnly, for it was grete shame to all them to see suche a boye to have a rule of soo noble a reaume as this land was. With this ansuer the messagers departed and told to kyng Arthur this ansuer, wherfor by the advys of his barons he took hym to a strong towre with fyve hondred good men with hym. And all the kynges aforesaid in a maner leyd a syege tofore hym, but kyng Arthur was well vytailled.

And within fyftene dayes ther came Merlyn amonge hem into the cyté of Carlyon. Thenne all the kynges were passyng gladde of Merlyn and asked hym,

‘For what cause is that boye Arthur made your kyng?’

‘Syres,’ said Merlyn, ‘I shalle telle yow the cause, for he is kyng Uther Pendragons sone borne in wedlok, goten on Igrayne, the dukes wyf of Tyntigail.’

'Thenne is he a bastard,' they said al.

'Nay,' said Merlyn, 'after the deth of the duke more than thre houres was Arthur begoten, and thirtene dayes after kyng Uther wedded Igrayne, and therfor I preve hym he is no bastard. And, who saith nay, he shal be kyng and overcome alle his enemyes, and or he deye he shalle be long kynge of all Englund and have under his obeysaunce Walys, Yrland, and Scotland, and moo reames than I will now reherce.'

10 Some of the kynges had merveyll of Merlyns wordes and demed well that it shold be as he said, and som of hem lough hym to scorne, as kyng Lot, and mo other called hym a wytche. But thenne were they accorded with Merlyn that kyng Arthur shold come oute and speke with the kynges,
15 and to come sauf and to goo sauf, suche suraunce ther was made. So Merlyn went unto kyng Arthur and told hym how he had done and badde hym, 'Fere not, but come oute boldly and speke with hem; and spare hem not, but ansuere them as their kyng and chyvetayn, for ye shal overcome
20 hem all, whether they wille or nylle.'

(9) Thenne kyng Arthur came oute of his tour and had under his gowne a jesseraunte of double maylle, and ther wente with hym the Archebisshop of Caunterbury, and syr Baudewyn of Bretayne, and syr Kay, and syre Brastias; these
25 were the men of moost worship that were with hym. And whan they were mette there was no mekenes but stoute wordes on bothe sydes, but alweyes kyng Arthur ansuerd them and said he wold make them to bowe and he lyved, wherfore they departed with wrath. And kyng Arthur
30 badde kepe hem wel, and they bad the kyng kepe hym wel. Soo the kyng retorneyd hym to the toure ageyne and armed hym and alle his knyghtes.

'What will ye do?' said Merlyn to the kynges. 'Ye were better for to stynte, for ye shalle not here prevaille, though
35 ye were ten so many.'

'Be we wel avysed to be aferd of a dreame-reder?' said kyng Lot.

With that Merlyn vanysshed awaye and came to kyng Arthur and bad hym set on hem fiersly. And in the mene-
40 whyle there were thre honderd good men of the best that

were with the kynges that wente streyghte unto kyng
Arthur, and that comforted hym gretely.

'Syr,' said Merlyn to Arthur, 'fyghte not with the swerde
that ye had by myracle til that ye see ye go unto the wers;
thenne drawe it out and do your best.'

So forthwithalle kyng Arthur sette upon hem in their
lodgyng, and syre Bawdewyn, syre Kay, and syr Brastias
slewe on the right hand and on the lyfte hand, that it was
merveylle; and alweyes kyng Arthur on horsback leyd on
with a swerd and dyd merveillous dedes of armes, that many
of the kynges had grete joye of his dedes and hardynesse.
Thenne kyng Lot brake out on the bak syde, and the Kyng
with the Honderd Knyghtes and kyng Carados, and sette
on Arthur fiersly behynde hym.

With that syre Arthur torned with his knyghtes and
smote behynd and before, and ever sir Arthur was in the
formest prees tyl his hors was slayne undernethe hym. And
therwith kyng Lot smote doune kyng Arthur. With that
his four knyghtes receyved hym and set hym on horsback;
thenne he drewe his swerd Excalibur, but it was so bryght
in his enemyes eyen that it gaf light lyke thirty torchys, and
therwith he put hem on bak and slewe moche peple. And
thenne the comyns of Carlyon aroos with clubbis and stavys
and slewe many knyghtes, but alle the kynges helde them
togydres with her knyghtes that were lefte on lyve, and so
fled and departed; and Merlyn come unto Arthur and coun-
ceilled hym to folowe hem no further.

So after the feste and journeye kyng Arthur drewe hym
unto London. And soo by the counceil of Merlyn the kyng
lete calle his barons to counceil, for Merlyn had told the
kyng that the sixe kynges that made warre upon hym wold
in al haste be awroke on hym and on his landys; wherfor
the kyng asked counceil at hem al. They coude no counceil
gyve, but said they were bygge ynough.

'Ye saye well,' said Arthur, 'I thanke you for your good
courage; but wil ye al that loveth me speke with Merlyn?
Ye knowe wel that he hath done moche for me, and he
knoweth many thynges. And whan he is afore you I wold
that ye prayd hym hertely of his best avyse.'

Alle the barons sayd they wold pray hym and desyre hym.

Soo Merlyn was sente for and fair desyred of al the barons to gyve them best counceil.

'I shall say you,' said Merlyn, 'I warne yow al, your enemyes are passyng strong for yow, and they are good men
5 of armes as ben on lyve. And by thys tyme they have gotten to them four kynges mo and a myghty duke, and onlesse that our kyng have more chyvalry with hym than he may make within the boundys of his own reame, and he fyghte with hem in batail, he shal be overcome and slayn.'

10 'What were best to doo in this cause?' said al the barons.

'I shal telle you,' said Merlyn, 'myne advys. There ar two bretheren beyond the see, and they be kynges bothe and merveillous good men of her handes: and that one hyghte kyng Ban of Benwic, and that other hyght kyng Bors of
15 Gaule, that is Fraunce. And on these two kynges warrith a myghty man of men, the kyng Claudas, and stryveth with hem for a castel; and grete werre is betwixt them. But this Claudas is so myghty of goodes wherof he geteth good knyghtes that he putteth these two kynges moost parte
20 (t)o the werse. Wherfor this is my counceil: that our kyng and soverayne lord sende unto the kynges Ban and Bors by two trusty knyghtes with letters wel devysed, that and they wil come and see] kyng Arthur and his courte and helpe hym
f^o 9^r in hys warrys, that he wolde be sworne unto them to helpe
25 hem in their warrys agaynst kyng Claudas. Now what sey ye unto thys counceyle?' seyde Merlyon.

'Thys ys well councelde,' seyde the kyng.

And in all haste two barownes ryght so were ordayned to go on thys message unto thes two kyngis, and lettirs were
30 made in the moste plesauntist wyse accordynge unto kyng Arthurs desyre, and Ulphuns and Brastias were made the messyngers; and so rode forth well horsed and well i-armed and as the gyse was that tyme, and so passed the see and rode towarde the cité of Benwyk. And there besydes were
35 eyght knyghtes that aspyed hem, and at a strayte passage they mette with Ulphuns and Brastias and wolde a takyn

20 C do the

23 W begins (kyng Arthur etc.)

23 W to helpe C so helpe

24 C he wil

27-9 C the kyng & alle the Barons right so in alle haste ther were ordeyned to goo two knyghtes on the message

30 C in the plesaunt

31 C Vlfyus

36 C hane taken S haue taken

them presoners. So they preyde them that they myght passe, for they were messyngers unto kyng Ban and Bors isente frome kynge Arthure.

'Therefore,' seyde the knyghtes, 'ye shall dey othir be presoners, for we be knyghtes of kynge Claudas.'

And therewith two of them dressed their sperys unto Ulphuns and Brastias, and they dressed their sperys and ran togydir with grete random. And Claudas his knyghtes brake theire spearis, and Ulphuns and Brastias bare the two knyghtes oute of their sadils to the erth and so leffte them lyyng and rode their wayes. And the other six knyghtes rode before to a passage to mete with them ayen, and so Ulphuns and Brastias othir two smote downe and so paste on hir wayes. And at the fourthe passage there mette two for two and bothe were leyde unto the erthe. So there was none of the eyght knyghtes but he was hurte sore othir brused.

And whan they com to Benwyke hit fortunede both the kynges be there, Ban and Bors. Than was hit tolde the two kyngis how there were com two messyngers. And anone there was sente unto them two knyghtes of worship, that one hyght Lyonses, lorde of the contrey of 'Payarne', and sir Pharyauce, a worshipfull knyght; and anone asked them frome whens they com, and they seyde frome kyng Arthure, kynge of Ingelonde. And so they toke them in theire armys and made grete joy eche of othir. But anone as they wyste they were messyngers of Arthurs there was made no taryng, but forthwith they spake with the kyngis. And they welcommed them in the most faythfullyst wyse and seyde they were moste welcom unto them before all the kynges men lyyng. And therewith they kyssed the lettirs and delyvird them. And whan kyng Ban and Bors undirstoode them and the lettirs, than were they more welcom than they were tofore.

And aft[er] the haste of the lettirs they gaff hem thys

4 C said the viii knyghtes 6-7 C their sperys and Vlffus and Brastias dressid
theire speres and ranne 8 C Claudas knyghtes 9 C speres and ther to hylde
and bare† 13 C Brastias smote other two doun 18 C And whan it was
18 two *not in C* 19 And anone *not in C* 20 C were 21 W Bayarne
C* payarne F (MS. Harl. 6340, f. 67^v) palerne 22 C phariaunce 22-3 C
they asked from 25 C as the ii kynges wist 27 C with the knyghtest†
28 most *not in C* 30 men *not in C* 31 kyng *not in C* 33 C were before

answere that they wolde fulfille th[e] desire of kyng Arthurs
 wrytynge, and bade sir Ulphuns and sir Brastias tarry there
 as longe as they wolde, for they shulde have such chere as
 myght be made for them in thys marchis. Than Ulphuns
 5 and Brastias tolde the kynge of their adventure at the pas-
 sagis for the eyght knyghtes. 'A ha,' seyde Ban and Bors,
 'they were oure good frendis. I wolde I had wyste of them,
 and they sholde nat so [have] ascaped.' So thes two
 knyghtes had good chere and grete gyfftis as much as they
 10 myght bere away, and had their answer by mowth and by
 wrytynge that the two kynges wolde com unto Arthure in
 all the haste that they myght.

So thes two knyghtes rode on afore and passed the see
 and com to their lorde and tolde hym how they had spedde,
 15 wherefore kyng Arthure was passyng glad and seyde, 'How
 suppose you, at what tyme woll thes two kynges be here?'
 'Sir,' they seyde, 'before Allhalowmasse.'

Than the kynge lette purvey a grete feste, and also he
 lette cry both turnementis and justis thorowoute all his
 20 realme, and the day appoynted and sette at Allhalowmasse.
 And so the tyme drove on and all thynges redy ipurveyed.
 Thes two noble kynges were entirde the londe and comyn
 ovir the see with three hondred knyghtes full well arayed
 both for the pees and also for the werre. And so royally they
 25 were resceyved and brought towarde the cité of London.
 And so Arthure mette them ten myle oute of London, and
 there was grete joy made as couthe be thought.

And on Allhalowmasse day at the grete feste sate in the
 hall the three kynges, and sir Kay the Senesciall served in
 30 the halle, and sir Lucas the Butler that was Duke Corneus
 son, and sir Gryfflet that was the son of God of Cardal: thes
 three knyghtes had the rule of all the servyse that served
 the kyngis. And anone as they were redy and wayshe[n], all

1 *W* thy desire 3 for *not in C* 5-6 *C* of the adniture at their passages of the
 7 *C* were my tgood 8-9 *C* not haue escaped so So Vlfius & Brastias had
 13 *C* So the two knythes 15-16 *C* gladde At what tyme suppose ye the ij
 Kynges wol be here 18-23 *C* feeste and lete crye a grete Iustes And by all halow-
 masse the two kynges were come ouer thesee with thre honderd knyghtes wel arayed†
 24 also *not in C* 24-5 And so royally . . . London *not in C†* 27-8 *C* ioye
 as coude be thouzt or made And on 29-30 *C* syre kay sencial . . . lucas the
 bottelere 31 of God *not in C†* *F* (MS. Harl. 6340, f. 68^v, col. 2) girflis le
 filz dou de carduel 33 *W* washer *C* they had wasshen & rysen al knyghtes

the knyghtes that wolde juste made hem redy. And be
 than they were redy on horsebak there was seven hondred
 knyghtes. And kynge Arthure, Ban, and Bors, with the
 Archebyssshop of Caunterbyry, and sir Ector, Kays fadir,
 they were in a place covirde with clothys of golde lyke unto
 an halle, with ladyes and jantillwomen for to beholde who
 dud beste and thereon to gyff a jugemente.

And kyng Arthure with the two kyngis lette departe the (11)
 seven hondred knyghtes in two partyes. And there were
 three hondred knyghtes of the realme of Benwyke and Gaule
 that turned on the othir syde. And they dressed their
 shyldis and began to couche hir sperys, many good knyghtes.
 So sir Gryfflet was the firste that sette oute, and to hym com
 a knyght, hys name was sir Ladynas, and they com so
 egerly togydir that all men had wondir, and they so sore
 fought that hir shyldis felle on pecis and both horse and
 man felle to the erthe, and both the Frensh knyght and the
 Englysh knyght lay so longe that all men wente they had
 bene dede. Whan Lucas the Butler saw sir Gryfflet ly so
 longe, he horsed hym agayne anone, and they too ded many
 marvelous dedis of armys with many bachelers.

Also sir Kay com oute of a bushement with fyve knyghtes
 with hym, and they six smote othir six downe. But sir Kay
 dud that day many mervaylous dedis of armys, that there
 was none that dud so welle as he that day. Than there com
 Ladynas and Grastian, two knyghtes of Fraunse, and dud
 passynge well, that all men praysed them. Than com in sir
 Placidas, a good knyght, that mette with sir Kay and smote
 hym downe horse and man, wherefore sir Gryfflet was wroth
 and mette with sir Placidas so harde that horse and man
 felle to the erthe. But whan the fyve knyghtes wyst that
 sir Kay had a falle they were wroth oute of mesure and there-
 withall ech of them fyve bare downe a knyght.

Whan kynge Arthur and the two kynges saw hem be-
 gynne wexe wroth on bothe partyes, they leped on smale
 hakeneyes and lette cry that all men sholde departe unto
 theire lodgyng. And so they wente home and unarmed

13-15 *C* that mette with a knyghte one ladynas and they mett so egerly that al 15
 sore *not in C* 19-20 *C* Gryfflet soo lye he 24 many *not in C* 27 *C* come there
 Syre 32-3 *C* out of wyt And therewith eche 37 *C** vnarmed *W* unarmed

them, and so to evynsonge and souper. And aftir souper
 the three kynges went into a gardyne and gaff the pryce
 unto sir Kay and unto sir Lucas the Butler and unto sir
 Gryfflet. And than they wente unto counceyle, and with
 5 hem Gwenbaus, brothir unto kynge Ban and Bors, a wyse
 clerke; and thidir wente Ulphuns, Brastias and Merlion.
 And aftir they had [ben] in her counceyle they wente unto
 bedde. And on the morne they harde masse, and to dyner and
 so to their counceyle, and made many argumentes what were
 10 beste to do.

So at the laste they were concluded that M[erlion] sholde
 go with a tokyn of kynge Ban, that was a rynge, unto hys
 men and kynge Bors; Gracian and Placidus sholde go
 agayne and kepe their castels and their contreyes; and
 15 as for kynge Ban of Benwyke and kynge Bors of Gaule, (they)
 had ordayned them all thyng. And so (they) passed the see
 and com to Benwyke. And whan the people sawe kynge
 Bannys rynge, and Gracian and Placidus, they were glad
 and asked how their kynge fared and made grete joy of
 20 their welfare. And accordyng unto their soveraigne lordis
 10^v desire, the m[e]n of warre made hem redy in all haste
 possible, so that they were fyftene thousand on horsebacke
 and foote, and they had grete plenté of vitayle by Merlions
 provisions. But Gracian and Placidus were lefte at home to
 25 furnysh and garnysh the castell for drede of kyng Claudas.

Ryght so Merlion passed the see well vitayled bothe by
 watir and by londe. And whan he com to the see he sente
 home the footemen agayne, and toke no mo with hym but
 ten thousand men on horsebake, the moste party of men of
 30 armys; and s(c)hipped and passed the see into Inglonde
 and loded at Dovor. And thorow the wytte of Merlion he
 ledde the oste northwarde the pryvéyst wey that coude be
 thought, unto the foreste of Bedgrayne, and there in a valey

1-2 C after the 5 C syr Ban 7 C had ben in counceill 12 C Ban
 and that was 14-16 C countreyes as for kynge Ban of Benwick and kynge
 Bors of Gaules had ordeyned hem and so passed Both W and C seem incomplete,
 and F (MS. Harl. 6340, f. 73^r, col. 1) throws no light on this passage. 19 C
 how the kynges ferd 20 C welfare and cordyng and accordyng vnto the
 souerayne 21 W desire and the man C desyre the men 22 C on hors
 23-4 C vytaylle with hem by Merlyns prouysyon 24 at home not in C 25 C
 the castels 29 C mooste parte men of 30 W so hipped C so shpped
 31-2 C† he had the hoost

lodged hym secretly. Than rode Merlion to Arthure and to the two kynges, and tolde hem how he had spedde, whereof they had grete mervayle that ony man on erthe myght spede so sone to go and com. So Merlion tolde them how ten thousande were in the forest of Bedgrayne well 5 armed at all poyntis.

Than was there no more to sey, but to horsebak wente all the oste as Arthure had before provyded. So with twenty thousand he passed by nyght and day. Bu[t] there was made such an ordinaunce afore by Merlyon that there sholde no 10 man of warre ryde nothir go in no contrey on this syde Trente watir but if he had a tokyn frome kynge Arthure, wherethorow the kynges enemyes durst nat ryde as they dud tofore to aspye.

And so wythin a litill whyle the three kyngis com to the 15 (12) forest of Bedgrayne and founde there a passynge fayre felyship and well besene, whereof they had grete joy, and vitayle they wanted none.

Thys was the causis of the northir hoste, that they were rered for the despite and rebuke that the 'six' kyngis had 20 at Carlyon. And tho six kyngis by hir meanys gate unto them fyve othir kyngis; and thus they began to gadir hir people, and <now> they swore nother for welle nothyr wo they sholde nat lyve tyll they had destroyed Arthure.

And than they made an othe, and the first that began the 25 othe was the deuke of Can[benet], that he wolde brynge with hym 'fyve' thousand men of armys, the which were redy on horsebakke. Than swore kynge Brandegoris of Strangore that he wolde brynge with hym fyve thousand men of armys on horsebacke. Than swore kynge Clarivaus 30 of Northumbirlonde wolde brynge 'three' thousand men of armys with hym. Than swore the Kynge with the Hundred Knyghtes that was a passynge good man and a yonge,

1 C lodged hem 3 C merneylle (S merueylle) that man 4 C soone and goo
5 C Bedgrayne 8 C afore purueyed So 15-16 C lytel space the thre kynges
came vnto the Castel of Bedgrayne In *F the armies gather en la prairie de bedingran*
and stay dessoubz le chastele de Bedingran (MS. Harl. 6340, f. 73^o, col. 1) 19 C
the cause of 20 W vii C syx 23 W, C how 23-4 C sware that sor wele
nor woo they shold not leue other tyl 26 W Candebenet (cf. p. 28, l. 1) 27 W
vi M C v M F (loc. cit.) cinq mille hommes 31 W in M men C* thre
thousand men F (loc. cit.) trois mille hommes 32 wyth hym not in C

11^r that he wold brynge four thousand good men of armys on horsebacke. Than there swore kynge Lott, a passyng good knyght and fadir unto sir Gawayne, that he wolde brynge fyve thousand good men of armys on horsebak. Also the[r]
 5 swore kynge Uryens that was sir Uwaynes fadir of the londe of Goore, and he wolde brynge six thousand men of armys on horsebak. Also there swore kynge Idres of Cornuwaile that he wolde brynge fyve thousand men of armys on horsebake. Also there swore kynge Cradilmans to brynge fyve
 10 thousand men on horsebacke. Also there swore kyng Angwyssshauns of Irelande to brynge fyve thousand men of armys on horsebak. Also there swore kynge Nentres to brynge fyve thousand men on horsebak. Also there swore kynge Carados to brynge fyve thousand men of armys on
 15 horsebak. So hir hole oste was of clene men of armys: on horsebacke was fully fyffty thousand, and on foote ten thousand of good mennes bodyes.

Than they were sone redy and mounted uppon horsebacke, and sente forthe before the foreryders. For thes a
 20 eleven kynges in hir wayes leyde a sege unto the castell of Bedgrayne; and so they departed and drew towarde Arthure, and lefte a fewe to byde at the sege, for the castell of Bedgrayne was an holde of kynge Arthurs and the men that were within were kynge Arthurs men all.

25 So by Merlyons advice there were sente foreryders to skymme the contrey; and they mette with the foreryders of the Northe and made hem to telle which way the oste com. And than they tolde kynge Arthure, and by kynge Ban and Bors his counceile they lette brenne and destroy all the
 30 contrey before them there they sholde ryde.

The Kynge of the Hondred Knyghtis that tyme mette a wondir dreme two nyghtes before the batayle: that there blew a grete wynde and blew downe hir castels and hir townys, and aftir that com a watir and bare hit all away.
 35 And all that herde of that swevyn seyde hit was a tokyn of

1 good <i>not in C</i>	3 C'and syre Gawayns fader	4 good <i>not in C</i>	5 C
Vryence	6 C gore	9 C cardelmans	11 C Agwysaunce
of armes on	16 was fully <i>not in C</i>	18-19 C vpon hors and sente forth	13 C men
their fore rydars	19 thes a <i>not in C</i>	22 C lefte fewe	23 C was
holden of kynge Arthur	24-5 C were theryn were Arthurs so by		28 C
told it to Arthur	29 his <i>not in C</i>	31 that tyme <i>not in C</i>	

grete batayle. Than by counceile of Merlion, whan they wyst which wey the an eleven kynges wolde ryde and lodge that nyght, at mydnyght they sette uppon them as they were in their pavilions. But the scowte-wacche by hir oste cryed: 'Lordis, to 'armes'! for here be oure enemyes at youre honde!' ⁵

Than kynge Arthure and kynge Ban and Bors with hir ⁽¹⁴⁾ good and trusty knyghtes sette uppon them so fersely that he made them overthrowe hir pavilions on hir hedis. But ¹¹ the eleven kynges by manly prouesse of armys toke a fayre champion, but there was slayne that morow tyde ten thou- ¹⁰ sand good mennes bodyes. And so they had before hem a stronge passage; yet were there fyfty thousand of hardy men.

Than hit drew toward day. 'Now shall ye do by myne advice,' seyde Merlyon unto the three kyngis, and seyde: 'I ¹⁵ wolde kynge Ban and Bors with hir felyship of ten thousand men were put in a woode here besyde in an inbusshement and kept them prevy, and that they be leyde or the lyght of the day com, and that they stire nat tyll that ye and youre knyghtes [have] fought with hem longe. And whan hit ys ²⁰ daylyght, dresse youre batayle evyn before them and the passage, that they may se all youre oste, for than woll they be the more hardy whan they se you but aboute twenty thousande, and cause hem to be the gladder to suffir you and youre oste to com over the passage.' ²⁵

All the three kynges and the hole barownes seyde how Merlion devised passynge well, and so hit was done.

So on the morn whan aythir oste saw othir, they of the Northe were well comforted. Than Ulphuns and Brastias were delyvirde three thousand men of armys, and they sette ³⁰ on them fersely in the passage, and slew on the ryght honde and on the lyfte honde that hit was wondir to telle. But whan the eleven kynges saw that there was so few a felyship that dud such dedis of armys, they were ashamed and sette on hem agayne fersely. And there was sir Ulphuns horse ³⁵ slayne, but he dud mervelously on foote. But the duke

2 *C* the xj kynges 5 *W* to harneys *C** to armes *F* as armes 12 *S* passaye
 15 and seyde *not in C* 18 *C†* and kepe hem 20 *W* knyghtes
 and fought 26-7 *C* sayde that Merlyn said passyngly wel and it was done anone
 as Merlyn had deuysed Soo 28-9 *C* other the hoost of the north was well
 29 *C* to Vlfyus 36 *C* slayne vnder hym but he dyd merueylously well on foote

Es^rt^lanse of Can^rbenet^l and kynge Clarivaunce of Northe-
 humbirlonde were allwey greuously set on Ulphuns. Than
 sir Brastias saw his felow yfared so withall, he smote the
 duke with a spere, that horse and man felle downe. That
 5 saw kyng Claryvauns, and returne[d] unto sir Brastias, and
 eythir smote othir so that horse and man wente to the erthe.
 And so they lay longe astoned, and their horse knees braste
 to the harde bone.

Than com sir Kay the Senesciall with six felowis with
 10 hym and dud passynge well. So with that com the eleven
 kyngis, and there was Gryfflette put to the erth horse and
 man, and Lucas the Butler horse and man, [by] kynge
 Brandegoris and kynge Idres and kynge Angwyshaunce.

Than wexed the medlee passyng harde on both parties.
 15 Whan sir Kay saw sir Gryfflet on foote, he rode unto kynge
 Nentres and smote hym downe, and ledde his horse unto
 sir Gryfflette and horsed hym agayne. Also sir Kay with
 12^r the same spere smote downe kynge Lotte and hurte hym
 passynge sore. That saw the Kyng with the Hondred
 20 Knyghtes and ran unto sir Kay and smote hym downe, and
 toke hys horse and gaff hym kynge Lotte, whereof he seyde
 gramercy. Whan sir Gryfflet saw sir Kay and sir Lucas de
 Butler on foote, he with a sherpe spere grete and square rode
 to Pynnel, a good man of armys, and smote horse and man
 25 downe, and than he toke hys horse and gaff hym unto sir
 Kay.

Than kynge Lotte saw kynge Nentres on foote, he ran
 unto Meliot de la Roche and smote hym downe horse and
 man, and gaff hym (to kynge Nentres) the horse and horsed
 30 hym agayne. Also the Kyng with the Hondred Knyghtes
 saw kynge Idres on foote, he ran unto Gwyniarde de Bloy
 and smote hym downe horse and man, and gaff kynge Idres
 the horse and horsed hym agayne. Than kynge Lotte smote
 downe Clarinaus de la Foreyste Saveage and gaff the horse
 35 unto duke Estans. And so whan they had horsed the kyngis

1 C Eustace of Cambenet W Eskance of Candebenet F (MS. Harl. 6340, f. 76^v,
 col. 1) Estams de Cambenit (cf. p. 31, line 1) C Claryvaunce 2 C alweye greuous
 on Vlflyus 3 C felawe ferd so 5 C retorned 12 C man by kynge
 18 W and hurte repeated 23 C he tooke a sharp spere grete and square and rode
 28 C Melot 29 hym to not in C 31 C Gwmyart† F (MS. cit., f. 74^r,
 col. 2) Guynas 33 W That kynge C & kyng 35 C Eustace (see note 1).

agayne, they drew hem all eleven kynges togydir, and seyde they wolde be revenged of the damage that they had takyn that day.

The meanewhyle com in kyng Arthure with an egir countenans, and founde Ulphuns and Brastias on foote, in grete ⁵ perell of dethe, that were fowle defoyled undir the horse feete. Than Arthure as a lyon ran unto kyng Cradilmont of North Walis and smote hym thorow the lyffte syde, that horse and man felle downe. Than he toke the horse by the reygne and led hym unto Ulphine and seyde, 'Have this ¹⁰ horse, myne olde frende, for grete nede hast thou of an horse.' 'Gramercy,' seyde Ulphuns.

Than kyng Arthure dud so mervaylesly in armys that all men had wondir. Whan the Kyng with the Hondred Knyghtes saw kyng Cradilmonte on foote, he ran unto sir ¹⁵ Ector, sir Kayes fadir, that was well ihorsed and smote horse and man downe, and gaff the horse unto the kyng and horsed hym agayne. And whan kyng Arthure saw that kyng ryde on sir Ectors horse he was wrothe, and with hys swerde he smote the kyng on the helme, that a quarter of ²⁰ the helme and shelde clave downe; and so the swerde carve downe unto the horse necke, and so man and horse felle downe to the grounde. Than sir Kay com unto kyng Morganoure, senesciall with the Kyng of the Hondred Knyghtes, and smote hym downe horse and man, and ledde ²⁵ the horse unto hys fadir, sir Ector.

Than sir Ector ran unto a knyght that hyght Lardans and ^{12v} smote horse and man downe, and lad the horse unto sir Brastias, that grete nede had of an horse and was gretly defoyled. Whan Brastias behelde Lucas the Butler that lay ³⁰ lyke a dede man undir the horse feete—and ever sir Gryflet dud mercyfully for to reskow hym, and there were allwayes fourtene knyghtes upon sir Lucas—and than sir Brastias smote one of them on the helme, that hit wente unto his tethe; and he rode unto another and smote hym, that hys arme flow ³⁵ into the felde; than he wente to the thirde and smote hym on

4 C cam in syr Ector† F (*ibid.*, f. 79^v, col. 1) Le rois Artus 6-7 C vnder horsfeet
 7 C Cradelmont 8-9 C that the hors and the kyng fyll 13 C syre Arthur
 16 C Ector that was wel horsed syr kayes fader and smote 18-19 C sawe the kyng
 21 C shelde fyll doune 22 C and so the kyng & the hors 23-4 C syr Morganore.
 Cf. p. 33, l. 12. 32 C dyd merueillously for 33 C Incas S lucas 35 C the arme

the shulder, that sholdir and arme flow unto the felde. And whan Gryfflet saw rescowis he smote a knyght on the templis, that hede and helme wente of to the erthe; and Gryfflet toke that horse and lad hym unto sir Lucas, and bade hym
 5 mownte uppon that horse and revenge his hurtis—for sir Brastias had slayne a knyght tofore—and horsed sir Lucas.

- (15) Than sir Lucas saw kyng Angwysschaunce that nygh^re^l had slayne Maris de la Roche; and Lucas ran to hym with
 10 a sherpe spere that was grete, and he gaff hym suche a falle that the horse felle downe to the erthe. Also Lucas founde there on foote Bloyas de la Fla^run^dres and sir Gwynas, two hardy knyghtes; and in that woodnes that Lucas was in, he slew two bachelers and horsed them agayne. Than
 15 wexed the batayle passynge harde one bothe partyes. But kyng Arthure was glad that hys knyghtes were horsed agayne. And than they fought togidres, that the noyse and the sowne range by the watir and woode. Wherefore kyng Ban and Bors made hem redy and dressed theire shyldis and
 20 harneysse, and were so currageous that their enemyes shooke and byverd for egrinnesse.

All thys whyle sir Lucas, Gwynas, Bryaunte, and Bellias of Flaundres helde stronge medlé agaynste six kynges, which were kyng Lott, kyng Nentres, kyng Brandegoris, kyng
 25 Idres, kyng Uriens and kyng Angwysschauns. So with the helpe of sir Kay and of sir Gryfflet they helde thes six kyngis harde, that unneth they had ony power to deffende them. But whan kyng Arthure saw the batayle wolde nat be ended by no maner, he fared woode as a lyon and stirred his horse
 30 here and there on the ryght honde and on the lyfte honde, that he stynted nat tylle he had slayne twenty knyghtes. Also he wounded kyng Lotte sore on the shulder, and made hym to leve that grownde, for sir Kay with sir Gryfflet
 13^r dud with kyng Arthure grete dedis of armys there.

35 Than sir Ulphuns, Brastias and sir Ector encountirde

3 of *not in C* 4 *C* took the hors of that knyght & lad 6-7 *C* horsed Gryfflet
 8-9 *W* that nyght had *C*† that late hadde *In F* Maris is attacked
 but not killed 8-9 *W* (*sidenote*): The dethe of Marys de la Roche 9 *C* Morys
 10 *C* a short† spere 10 *C* grete that he 12 *W* Flawdres *C** flaundres
F Flaundres 20 *C* that many knyghtes shoke 24 *W* kyng kyng Lott
 33 *C* kay & gryfflet 34 *W* armys dud there *C* there grete dedes of armes

agaynste the duke Estans and kynge Cradilmante and kynge Clariuauns of Northhumbirlande and kynge Carados and the Kynge with the Hondred Knyghtes. So thes kynges encountird with thes knyghtes, that they made them to avoyde the grounde. Than kynge Lotte made grete dole 5 for his damagis and his felowis, and seyde unto the kyngis,

'But if we woll do as I have devised, we all shall be slayne and destroyed. Lette me have the Kynge with the Hondred Knyghtes, and kynge Angwysshaunce, and kynge Idres, and the duke of Can¹benet¹. And we fyve kyngis woll have 10 ten thousand men of armys with us, and we woll go on one party whyle the six kynges holde the medlé with twelve thousand. And whan we se that ye have foughtyn with hem longe, than woll we com on freysshly; and ellis shall we never macche them,' seyde kynge Lotte, 'but by thys means.' 15 So they departed as they here devised, and thes six kyngis made their party stronge agaynste kyng Arthure and made grete warre longe in the meanwhyle.

Than brake the bushemente of kynge Banne and Bors; and Lionse and Phariaunce had that advaunte-garde, and 20 they two knyghtes mette with kynge Idres that was nere discomfited. That saw kynge Angwysshaunce, and put Lyoneses and Phariaunce in poynte of dethe, for the duke 'of Canbenet¹' com on with a grete felyship. So thes two knyghtes were in grete daungere of their lyves, that they 25 were fayne to returne; but allweyes they rescowed hemself and hir felyship merveylously. Whan kynge Bors saw tho knyghtes put on bak hit greved hym sore. Than he com on so faste that his felyship semed as blak as inde.

1 C† Eustace (F Estams) 1-2 C Cradelment & kyng Cradelmāt and kynge Clary-
 aunce 2-3 C Carados & ageynst the kyng with 3-4 C thes knyghtes encountered
 with these kynges 6-7 C the x kynges but yf ye wil do as I deuyse we shalle
 be slayn 9 C† Agwysaunce F Anguins 10 W Candebenet C* Canbenec
 F Cambenit 10-11 C† haue xv M men F is silent on this point but seems to
 support W. Cf. the remark: en firent six eschielles et en mirent en chascune deux mille
 hommes (MS. Harl. 6340, f. 78r, col. 1). 11-12 C go on parte† 12-13 C
 holde medle with XII M & we see 14 C com on fyersly 16 thes not in C
 18-19 C In the meane whyle brake 20 C Lyoneses and Pharyauce had the
 aduant 21-2 C kyng Idres and his felauship and there began a grete medele of
 brekyng of speres and smytynge of swerdys with sleynge of men and horses And
 kynge Idres was nere at discomforture That sawe (homoeoteleuton in W?) 22 C
 sawe Agwysannce the kynge 23-4 W duke Candebenet C duke of Canbenek
 F duc de Cambenit 24 C on with all with a grete

Whan kynge Lotte had aspyed kynge Bors, he knew hym well, and seyde,

'Jesu defende us from dethe and horryble maymes, for I se well we be in grete perell of dethe; for I se yondir a kynge,
5 one of the moste worshipfullst men, and the¹ best knyghtes of the worlde be inclyned unto his felyship.'

'What ys he?' seyde the Kynge with the Hu[n]dirde Knyghtes.

'Hit ys,' he seyde, 'kynge Bors of Gaule. I mervayle,'
10 seyde he, 'how they com unto this contrey withoute wetynge of us all.'

'Hit was by Merlions advice,' seyde a knyght.

'As for me,' seyde kynge Carados, 'I woll encountir with kynge Bors, and ye woll rescow me whan myster ys.'

15 'Go on,' seyde they, 'for we woll all that we may.'

Than kynge Carados and hys oste rode on a soffte pace tyll they com as nyghe kynge Bors as a bowe-draught. Than
13^v eythir lette theire horsys renne as faste as they myght. And Bleobris that was godson unto kynge Bors, he bare his
20 chyeff standard; that was a passyng good knyght. 'Now shall we se,' seyde kynge Bors, 'how thes northirne Bretons can bere theire armys!' So kynge Bors encountird with a knyght and smote hym throwoute with a spere, that he felle dede unto the erthe; and aftirwarde drew hys swerde and
25 dud mervaylous dedis of armys, that all partyes had grete wondir thereof. And his knyght[es] fayled nat but dud hir parte. And kynge Carados was smytten to the erthe. With that com the Kynge with the Hondred Knyghtes and rescowed kynge Carados myghtyly by force of armys, for
30 he was a passyng good knyght and but a yonge man.

(16) Be than com into the felde kynge Ban as ferse as a lyon, with bondis of grene and thereuppon golde. 'A ha,' seyde kynge Lott, 'we muste be discomfite, for yondir I se the moste valiante knyght of the worlde, and the man of moste
35 renowne, for such two brethirne as ys kynge Ban and kynge Bors ar nat lyvyng. Wherefore we muste nedis voyde or

2-3 C thenne he said O Ihesu

9 C is said kyng Lot kyng

13 C As for hym sayd kynge

eyther bataill lete C hors

Bors 26 W his knyght

5 W and of the C men & one of the (see note)

10 seyde he *not in C* 12 C said the knyghte

15 C said they al we wil do all that 18 C

19 C Bleoberys 22 C bere the armes & kyng

C his knyghtes 30 C knyght of a kyng & but

dye, and but if we avoyde manly and wysely there ys but dethe.' So wan thes two kyngis, Ban and Bors, com into the batayle, they com in so fersely that the strokis re[d]ounded agayne fro the woode and the watir. Wherefore kynge Lotte wepte for pité and dole that he saw so many good knyghtes take their ende. But thorow the grete force of kynge Ban they made bothe the northirne batayles that were parted hurteled togidirs for grete drede. And the three kynges and their knyghtes slew on ever, that hit was pité to se and to beholde the multitude of peple that fledde. 10

But kyng Lott and the Kyng with the Hundred Knyghtes and kynge Morganoure gadred the peple togydir passy[n]ge knyghtly, and dud grete proues of armys, and helde the batayle all the day lyke harde. Whan the Kyng with the Hundred Knyghtes behelde the grete damage that kynge Ban [dyd] he threste unto hym with his horse and smote hym an hyghe on the helme a grete stroke and stoned hym sore. Than kynge Ban was wood wrothe with hym and folowed on hym fersely. The othir saw that and caste up hys shelde and spored hys horse forewarde, but the stroke of kynge Ban downe felle and carve a cantell of the shelde, and the swerde sloode downe by the hawbirke byhynde hys backe and kut thorow the trappoure of stele and the horse evyn in two pecis, that the swerde felle to the erth. Than the Kyng of the Hundred Knyghtes voyded the horse lyghtly, and with hys swerde he broched the horse of kynge Ban thorow and thorow. With that kynge Ban voyded lyghtly from the dede horse and smote at that othir so egirly on the helme that he felle to the erthe. Also in that ire he felde kynge Morganoure, and there was grete slawghtir of good knyghtes and muche peple. 14^r 25 30

Be that tyme com into the prees kynge Arthure and founde kynge Ban stondynge amonge the dede men and dede horse, fyghtynge on foote as a wood lyon, that there com none nyghe hym as farre as he myght reche with hys 35

2 C whanne kynge Ban came 3-4 C he cam W rebounded agayne
 C* redounded ageyne 7 C were departed 9-10 C pyte on to behold that
 multitude of the people 12 W passyge C passygn 15-16 C kynge Ban
 dyd 18 wood *not in* C 21 C felle downe and 24 C the swerd felte the
 erth 28-9 C hors and thenne kynge Ban smote at the other so egrely and smote
 hym on the helme 31-2 C peple by than come

swerde; but he caught a grevous buffete, whereof kynge
 Arthure had grete pité. And kynge Arthure was so bloody
 that by hys shyldde there myght no man know hym, for all
 was blode and brayne that stake on his swerde and on hys
 5 shyldde. And as kynge Arthure loked besyde hym he sawe
 a knyght that was passyngely well horsed. And therewith
 kynge Arthure ran to hym and smote hym on the helme,
 that hys swerde wente unto his teeth, and the knyght sanke
 downe to the erthe dede. And anone kynge Arthure toke
 10 hys horse by the rayne and ladde hym unto kynge Ban and
 seyde, 'Fayre brothir, have ye thys horse, for ye have grete
 myster thereof, and me repentys sore of youre grete damage.'

'Hit shall be sone revenged,' seyde kynge Ban, 'for I
 truste in God myne hurte ys none suche but som of them
 15 may sore repente thys.'

'I woll welle,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'for I se youre dedys
 full actual; nevertheless I myght nat com to you at that
 tyme.'

But whan kynge Ban was mounted on horsebak, than
 20 there began a new batayle whych was sore and harde, and
 passynge grete slaughtir. And so thorow grete force kyng
 Arthure, kynge Ban, and kynge Bors made hir knyghtes
 alyght to wythdraw hem to a lytyll wood, and so over a
 litill ryvir; and there they rested hem, for on the nyght
 25 before they had no grete reste in the felde. And than the
 eleven kyngis put hem on an hepe all togydirs, as men adrad
 and oute of all comferte. But there was no man that myght
 passe them; they helde hem so harde togydirs bothe behynde
 and before that kynge Arthure had mervayle of theire dedis
 30 of armys and was passynge wrothe.

'A, sir Arthure,' seyde kynge Ban and kynge Bors, 'blame
 14v hem nat, for they do as good men ought to do. For be my
 fayth,' seyde kynge Ban, 'they ar the beste fyghtynge men
 and knyghtes of moste prouesse that ever y saw other herde
 35 off speke. And tho eleven kyngis ar men of grete worship;

4-5 *C* braynes on his sward And as Arthur loked by hym he sawe 7 *C* syre
 Arthur 9-10 *C* tooke the hors 11 *C* haue this 14 *C* myn eure is
 not suche 17 *C* come at yow 20 *C* beganne newe 22-3 *C* knyghtes
 a litel† to with drawe them But alwey the xi. kynges with her chyualrye neuer
 torned back and so withdrewe hem to a lytil woode and so ouer (possibly a
homoeoteleuton in W) 34-5 *C* herd speke of

and if they were longyng to you, there were no kynge undir hevyn that had suche eleven kyngis nother off suche worship.'

'I may nat love hem,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'for they wolde destroy me.'

'That know we well,' seyde kynge Ban and kynge Bors, 'for they ar your mortall enemyes, and that hathe bene preved beforehonde. And thys day they have done their parte, and that ys grete pité of their wyfulnes.'

Than all the eleven kynges drew hem togydir. And than seyde Lott, 'Lordis, ye muste do othirwyse than ye do, othir ellis the grete losses ys behynde: for ye may se what peple we have loste and what good men we lese because we wayte allweyes on thes footemen; and ever in savyng of one of thes footemen we lese ten horsemen for hym. Therefore thys ys myne advise: lette us putte oure footemen frome us, for hit ys nere nyght. For thys noble kynge Arthure woll nat tarry on the footemen, for they may save hemselff: the woode ys nerehonde. And whan we horsemen be togydirs, looke every of you kyngis lat make such ordinaunce that none breke uppon payne of deth. And who that seeth any man dresse hym to fle lyghtly, that he be slayne; for hit ys bettir we sle a cowarde than thorow a coward all we be slayne. How sey ye?' seyde kynge Lotte. 'Answer me, all ye kynges!'

'Ye say well,' seyde kynge Nentres. So seyde the Kynge with the Hondred Knyghtes; the same seyde kynge Carados and kynge Uryens; so seyde kynge Idres and kynge Brandegoris; so dud kyng Cradilmasse and the duke of Canbenet; the same seyde kynge Claryaunce, and so dud kynge Angwysshaunce, and swore they wolde never fayle other for lyff nothir for dethe. And whoso that fledde all they sholde be slayne. Than they amended their harneyse and ryghted their sheldis, and toke newe speris and sette hem on their thyghes, and stode styлле as hit had be a plumpe of woode.'

2 C suche xj knyghtes and of suche 4 for *not in C* 6 C that wote we
wel 11 C kynge Lott 12 C the grete losse is behynde ye may 17 W
for for hit ys 17 C For the noble Arthur 18 C hym self 20 C looke
eueryche of yow 23-4 C we to be slayne 26 C it is wel said quod kynge
Nentres 28 C so dyd kynge Idres 29 C Cradulmas W Candebenet.
Cf. p. 28, note 1 32-3 C fledde but did as they dyd shold be slayne

- (17) Whan kyng Arthure and kyng Ban and Bors behelde them and all hir knyghtes, they preysed them much for their noble chere of chevalry, fo[r] the hardyeste fyghters that ever they herde other saw. So furthwith there dressed
 5 a fourty knyghtes, and seyde unto the three kynges they wolde breke their batayle. And thes were their namys:
 15^r Lyonses, Phariaunce, Ulphuns, Brastias, Ector, Kayus, Lucas de Butler, Gryfflet la Fyse de Deu, Marrys de la Roche, Gwynas de Bloy, Bryaunte de la Foreyste Saveage,
 10 Bellaus, Morians of the Castel Maydyns, Flaundreus of the Castel of Ladyes, Annecians that was kyng Bors godson, a noble knyght, and Ladinas de la Rouse, Emerause, Caulas, Graciens le Castilion, Bloyse de la Case, and sir Colgrevaunce de Goore.
 15 All thes knyghtes rode on before with sperys on their thyghes and spurred their horses myghtly. And the eleven kyngis with parte of hir knyghtes rushed furthe as faste as they myght with hir sperys, and there they dud on bothe partyes merveylous dedes of armys. So there com into the
 20 thycke of the prees Arthure, Ban, and Bors, and slew down-ryght on bothe hondis, that hir horses wente in blood up to the fittlockys. But ever the eleven kyngis and the oste was ever in the visage of Arthure. Wherefore kyng Ban and Bors had grete mervayle consydering the grete slaughter
 25 that there was; but at the laste they were dryven abacke over a litill ryver.

With that com Merlion on a grete blacke horse and seyde unto kyng Arthure, 'Thou hast never done. Hast thou nat done inow? Of three score thousande thys day hast thou
 30 leffte on lyve but fyftene thousand! Therefore hit ys tyme to sey "Whol!" for God ys wroth with the for thou woll never have done. For yondir a eleven kynges at thys tyme woll nat be overthrowyn, but and thou tary on them ony lenger thy fortune woll turne and they shall encres. And therefore

1 C syre Arthur 2 C the mand all 3 W fo the C for the 4-5 C sawe
 with that there dressyd hem a xl noble knyghtes 8-9 C mariet† de la roche
 10 C flandreus 13-14 C Gracyens le castelyn one bloyse de la caase . . . gorre
 16-17 C myghtely as the horses myzte renne And the xj kynges with parte of her
 knyghtes russched with their horses as fast 20 W thes prees C the prees
 22 C and their hooste 28 kyng not in C 30 C xv M and it is tyme
 31 C saye ho for god is wrothe with the that thou 32 a not in C

withdraw you unto youre lodgyng and reste you as sone as ye may, and rewarde youre good knyghtes with golde and with sylver, for they have well deserved hit. There may no ryches be to dere for them, for of so fewe men as ye have there was never men dud more worshipfully in proues than 5 ye have done to-day: for ye have macched thys day with the beste fyghters of the worlde.'

'That ys trouthe,' seyde kynge Ban and Bors.

Than Merlyon bade hem, 'Withdraw where ye lyst, for thys three yere I dare undirtake they shall nat dere you; and 10 by that tyme ye shall hyre newe tydyngis.'

Than Merlion seyde unto Arthure, 'Thes eleven kyngis have more on hande than they are ware off, for the Sarezynes ar londe in their contreies mo than fourty thousande, and brenne and sle and have leyde syege to the castell Wandes- 15 borow, and make grete destruction: therefore drede you nat thys yere. Also, sir, all the goodis that be gotyn at this batayle lette hit be serched, and whan ye have hit in your 15v hondis lette hit be geffyn frendly unto thes two kyngis, Ban and Bors, that they may rewarde their knyghtes wythall: 20 and that shall cause straungers to be of bettir wyll to do you servyse at nede. Also ye be able to rewarde youre owne knyghtes at what tyme somever hit lykith you.'

'Ye sey well,' seyde Arthure, 'and as thou haste devised so shall hit be done.' 25

Whan hit was delyverde to thes kynges, Ban and Bors, they gaff the godis as frely to theire knyghtes as hit was geyvn to them.

Than Merlion toke hys leve of kynge Arthure and of the two kyngis, for to go se hys mayster Bloyse that dwelled in 30 Northumbirlonde. And so he departed and com to hys mayster that was passynge glad of hys commynge. And there he tolde how Arthure and the two kynges had spedde at the grete batayle, and how hyt was endyd, and tolde the namys of every kynge and knyght of worship that was there. 35 And so Bloyse wrote the batayle worde by worde as Merlion

5-6 C ther were neuer men dyd more of prowesse than they haue done 8-9 C
bors Also said Merlyn withdrawe yow where 11 C by than 14-15 C that
brenne 15 C att the castell 19 C gyuen frely vnto 23-4 C knyghtes of
your owne goodes whan someuer it lyketh you It is wel said qd Arthur 26 thes
kynges *not in C* 27 C knyghtes as frely as 30 C go and see C Bloyse

tolde hym, how hit began and by whom, and in lyke wyse how hit was ended and who had the worst. And all the batayles that were done in Arthurs dayes, Merlion dud hys mayster Bloyse wryte them. Also he dud wryte all the
 5 batayles that every worthy knyght ded of Arthurs courte.

So aftir this Merlion departed frome his mayster and com to kynge Arthure that was in the castell of Bedgrayne, that was one of the castels that stondith in the foreyste of Sherewood. And Merlion was so dysgyssed that kynge
 10 Arthure knewe hym nat, for he was all befurred in blacke shepis skynnes, and a grete payre of bootis, and a boowe and arowis, in a russet gowne, and brought wylde gyese in hys honde. And hit was on the morne aftir Candilmasse day. But kynge Arthure knew hym nat.

15 'Sir,' seyde Merlion unto the kynge, 'woll ye geff me a gyffte?'

'Wherefore,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'sholde I gyff the a gyffte, chorle?'

'Sir,' seyde Merlion, 'ye were bettir to gyff me a gyffte
 20 that ys nat in youre honde than to lose grete rychesse. For here in the same place there the grete batayle was, ys grete tresoure hydde in the erthe.'

'Who tolde the so, chorle?'

'Sir, Merlyon tolde me so,' seyde he.

25 Than Ulphuns and Brastias knew hym well inowghe and smyled. 'Sir,' seyde thes two knyghtes, 'hit ys Merlion that so spekith unto you.'

Than kynge Arthure was gretly abaysshed and had
 16^r mervayle of Merlion, and so had kynge Ban and Bors. So
 30 they had grete disporte at hym.

Than in the meanewhyle there com a damesell that was an erlis doughter; hys name was Sanam and hir name was Lyonors, a passynge fayre damesell. And so she cam thidir for to do omage as other lordis ded after that grete batayle.
 35 And kynge Arthure sette hys love gretly on hir, and so ded she uppon hym, and so the kynge had ado with hir and gate on hir a chylde. And hys name was Borre, that was aftir a good knyght and of the Table Rounde.

2 C had the werre All
 that stondyn in

4 C Bleyse do wryte Also he did do wryte
 23-4 C chorle said Arthur Merlyn told

8 C
 34 C after the

Than the[r] com worde that kynge Ryens of North Walis made grete warre on kynge Lodegreaunce of Camylarde, for the whiche kynge Arthure was wrothe, for he loved hym welle and hated kyng Royns, for allwayes he was agenst hym.

(So by ordinauns of the three kynges ther were sente home unto Benwyke a[ll] that wolde departe, for drede of kynge Claudas. Thes knyghtes: Pharyaunce, Anthemes, Graciens, and Lyonses Payarne were the leders of them that sholde kepe the two kynges londis.)

And than kynge Arthure, kynge Ban and kynge Bors departed with hir felyship, a twenty thousand, and cam within seven dayes into the contrey of Camylarde; and there rescowed kynge Lodegreaunce, and slew there muche people of kynge Ryons, unto the numbir of ten thousand, and putte hem to flyght. And than had thes thre kynges grete chere of kynge Lodegreaunce, and he thanked them of theire grete goodnes that they wolde revenge hym of his enemyes.

And there had Arthure the firste syght of queene Gwenyvere, the kyngis doughter of the londe of Camylarde, and ever aftir he loved hir. And aftir they were wedded, as hit tellith in the booke.

So breffly to make an ende, they took there leve to go into hir owne contreyes, for kynge Claudas dud grete destruction on their londis. Than seyde Arthure,

'I woll go with you.'

'Nay,' seyde the kyngis, 'ye shall nat at thys tyme, for ye have much to do yet in thys londe. Therefore we woll departe. With the grete goodis that we have gotyn in this londe by youre gyfftis we shall wage good knyghtes and withstonde the kynge Claudas hys malice, for, by the grace of God, and we have nede, we woll sende to you for succour.

1 *W* Than the com *C* thenne there cam. . . Ryence 2-3 *C* Lodegreaunce
of camylarde for the whiche thyng† arthur 6 *C* kynges that were 7 *W*
Benwyke and wolde *C* Benwyck all they wolde 8 Thes knyghtes *not in C*
8-9 *W* Graciens lyonses and payarne *C** Grasians and lyonses payarne
with the *F* Leonce de paerne 13 *C* within VI dayes *C* Camylarde
15-16 *C* x M men and put hym to 17 *C* that thanked 20-1 *C* syght
of gweneuer 21 of the londe *not in C* 22 *C* her After they were 28 *C* in
these landes 30 *C* departe and with the 30-1 *C* in these landes

And ye have nede, sende for us, and we woll nat tarry, by the feythe of oure bodies.'

'Hit shall nat nede,' seyde Merlion, 'thes two kynges to com agayne in the wey of warre; but I know well kynge
 5 Arthure may nat be longe frome you. For within a yere or
 16^v two ye shall have grete nede, than shall he revenge you of youre enemyes as ye have done on his. For thes eleven kyngis shall dye all in one day by the grete myght and prouesse of armys of two valyaunte knyghtes,'—as hit tellith
 10 aftir. Hir namys—Balyne le Saveage, and Balan, hys brothir, that were merveyulous knyghtes as ony was tho lyvyng.

Now turne we unto the eleven kynges that returned unto a cité that hyght Surhaute, which cité was within kynge Uriens londe; and there they refreysshed them as well as
 15 they myght, and made lechys serche for their woundis and sorowed gretly for the deth of hir people. So with that there com a messyngere and tolde how there was comyn into theyre londis people that were lawles, as well as Sarezynes a fourty thousande, and have brente and slayne all the
 20 people that they may com by withoute mercy, and have leyde sege unto the castell Wandesborow.

'Alas!' seyde the eleven kyngis, 'here ys sorow uppon sorow, and if we had nat warred agaynste Arthure as we have done, he wolde sone a revenged us. And as for kynge
 25 Lodegreauce, he lovithe Arthure bettir than us; and as for kynge Royens, he hath ynow ado with kynge Lodegreauce, for he hath leyde sege unto hym.'

So they consented togydir to kepe all the marchis of Cornuwayle, of Walis, and of the Northe. So firste they
 30 put kynge Idres in the cité of Nauntis in Bretayne with four thousand men of armys to wacche bothe watir and the londe. Also they put in the cyté of Wyndesan kynge

1 C And yf ye 3 C not saide Merlyn nede that these 6-7 C on youre
 10 C names ben Balyn 11 C that ben merueillous good knyghtes as ben
 ony lyuyng 13-14 C Surhaute . . . londe *not in C* 15 for *not in C* 21 C
 wadisborow 24 C soone reuenge vs 28 W they condescended C* they
 consentyd F (MS. Harl. 6340, f. 82v, col. 2) si s'acorderent a la fin a ce qu'il
 garniront les marches de Galene et Gorre et Galvoye et devers Cornuaille et devers
 Orchanye 31—p. 41, 2 W bothe water and the londe Also they had of othir men
 C bothe the water and the land Also they put in the cyte of Wyndesan kynge Nauntres
 of garlott with four thousand knyghtes to watche both on water and on lond Also
 they had F (MS. Harl. 6340, f. 83r, col. 1) L'autre cité qu'il envoyèrent garnir

Nauntres of Garlott with four thousand knyghtes to watche both on water and on lond. Also they¹ had of othir men of warre mo than eyght thousand for to fortifye all the fortresse in the marchys of Cornuwayle. Also they put mo kyngis in all the marchis of Walis and Scotlonde with many good⁵ men of armys, and so they kept hem togydirs the space of three yere and ever alyed hem with myghty kynges and dukis. And unto them felle kynge Royns of Northe Walis which was a myghty kynge of men, and Nero that was a myghty man of men. And all thys whyle they furnysshed¹⁰ and garnyssed hem of good men of armys and vitayle and of all maner of ablemente that pretendith to warre, to avenge hem for the batayl^[1]e of Bedgrayne, as hit tellith in the booke of adventures.

Than aftir the departynge of kynge Bans and Bors, kynge¹⁵ (19) Arthure rode unto the cité of Carlyon. And thydir com unto hym kynge Lottis wyff of Orkeney in maner of a message, but she was sente thydir to aspye the courte of kynge Arthure, and she com rychely beseyne with hir four sonnes, Gawayne, Gaheris, Aggravayne and Gareth, with many other²⁰ knyghtes and ladyes, for she was a passynge fayre lady. 17^r Wherefore the kynge caste grete love unto hir and desired to ly by her. And so they were agreed, and [he] begate upon hir sir Mordred. And she was syster on the modirs syde Igrayne unto Arthure. So there she rested hir a monthe,²⁵ and at the laste she departed.

Than the kynge dremed a mervaylous dreame whereof he was sore adrad. (But all thys tyme kynge Arthure knew nat kynge Lottis wyff was his sister.) But thus was the dreame of Arthure: hym thought there was com into hys³⁰ londe gryffens and serpentes, and hym thought they brente and slowghe all the people in the londe; and than he thought he fought with them and they dud hym grete harme and wounded hym full sore, but at the laste he slew hem.

si eut nom Huitdesant. A celle alla le roy Nantres de Garlot, si en emmena avec lui trois mile (*homoeoteleuton in W*) 4 C moo knyghtes in 8 C dukes and lordes And 9 C myghty man of men 12 C to the werre to anenge 13 W batayne C bataille 14 C aventures folowynge 16 the cite of *not in C* 20 C Agraauynes 23 C and he begate 24 sir *not in C* 24-5 C his syster on the moder syde Igrayne So ther 23-5 W (*sidenote*): A dreame of Arthure 30-1 C in to this land 33 C passynge grete

Whan the kyng waked, he was passynge hevy of hys dreame; and so to putte hit oute of thought he made hym redy with many knyghtes to ryde on huntynge. And as sone as he was in the foreste, the kyng saw a grete harte
 5 before hym. 'Thys harte woll I chace,' seyde kyng Arthure. And so he spurred hys horse and rode afir longe, and so be fyne force oftyn he was lyke to have smytten the herte. Wherefore as the kyng had chased the herte so longe that hys horse lost his brethe and felle downe dede, than a
 10 yoman fette the kyng another horse.

So the kyng saw the herte unboked and hys horse dede, he sette hym downe by a fowntayne, and there he felle downe in grete thought. And as he sate so hym thought he herde a noyse of howundis to the som of thirty, and with
 15 that the kyng saw com towarde hym the strongeste beste that ever he saw or herde of. So thys beste wente to the welle and dranke, and the noyse was in the bestes bealy lyke unto the questyng of thirty coupyl houndes, but alle the whyle the beest dranke there was no noyse in the bestes
 20 bealy¹. And therewith the beeste departed with a grete noyse, whereof the kyng had grete mervayle. And so he was in a grete thought, and therewith he felle on slepe.

Ryght so there com a knyght on foote unto Arthure, and seyde, 'Knyght full of thought and slepy, telle me if
 25 thou saw any stronge beeste passe thys way.'

'Such one saw I,' seyde kyng Arthure, 'that ys paste nye two myle. What wolde ye with that beeste?' seyde Arthure.

'Sir, I have folowed that beste longe and kylde myne horse, so wolde God I had another to folow my queste.'

30 Ryght so com one with the kyngis horse. And whan

6 C the horse 7-8 C herte where as the kyng 9 C hors had loste 11 C the herte enbusshed and
 12-13 C fell in grete thoughtes 15 C saw comyng
 15 C the straungest best F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 76a) une beste moult grant ici estoit la plus diverse qui onques fust veue de sa figure qui tant estoit estraingne de cors et de faiture. 17-20 W the noyse in the bestes bely and therewith C bely lyke unto the questyng of xxx coupyl houndes but alle the whyle the beest dranke there was no noyse in the bestes bely and therwith F (*loc. cit.*) elle a dedens son cors brakés tout vis qui glatissent . . . (f. 76b) Et si tost comme elle ot commenchié a boire, le (les?) biestes qui dedens li estoient et glatissoient s'acoisent et se tinrent coiement. Quant elle ot beu et fu issue de la fontaine, si recommancierent a glatir autressi comme il faisoient devant 25 C thow sawest a straunge best
 26 nye not in C 27 C with the best 28 C long tyme

the knyght saw the horse he prayde the kyng to gyff hym 17^v
 the horse, 'for I have folowed this queste thys twelve-monthe,
 and othir I shall encheve hym othir blede of the beste bloode
 in my body.' (Whos name was kyng Pellynor that tyme
 folowed the questynge beste, and afftir hys dethe sir 5
 Palomydes folowed hit.)

'Sir knyght,' seyde the kyng, 'leve that queste and suffir (20)
 me to have hit, and I woll folowe hit anothir twelve-monthe.'

'A, foole!' seyde the kyng unto Arthure, 'hit ys in vayne
 thy desire, for hit shall never be encheved but by me other 10
 by my nexte kynne.'

And therewithe he sterte unto the kyngis horse and
 mownted into the sadyl and seyde, 'Gramercy, for this
 horse ys myne owne.'

'Well,' seyde the kyng, 'thou mayste take myne horse 15
 by force, but and I myght preve hit I wolde weete whether
 thou were bettir worthy to have hym or I.'

Whan the kyng herde hym sey so he seyde, 'Seke me
 here whan thou wolte, and here nye thys welle thou shalte
 fynde me,' and soo passed on his weye. Thenne the kyng 20
 sat in a study¹ and bade hys men fecche another horse as
 faste as they myght.

Ryght so com by hym Merlyon lyke a chylde of fourtene
 yere of ayge and salewed the kyng and asked hym whye
 he was so pensyff. 25

'I may well be pensiff,' seyde the kyng, 'for I have sene
 the mervaylist syght that ever I saw.'

'That know I well,' seyde Merlyon, 'as welle as thyselff,
 and of all thy thoughtes. But thou arte a foole to take
 thought for hit that woll nat amende the. Also I know 30
 what thou arte, and who was thy fadir, and of whom thou

4-5 C body Pellinore that tyme kyng folowed 6 C Palamydes 9 C said
 the Knyghte vnto 16-18 C preue the whether thou were better on horsbak
 or I wel said the knyght seke me 20-2 W fynde me and bade hys men
 C* fynde me and soo passyd on his weye thenne the kyng sat in a study and bad his
 men fetcche his hors as faste as euer they myghte F (Huth Merlin, f. 77b) Atant
 s'em parti li chevaliers et s'en vait grant oirre cele part ou sa beste s'en estoit alee.
 Et li rois vint a l'escuier, se li dist qu'il s'en aille et li amaint uns autre cheval. . .
 Illuec demoura li rois grant piece tant pensis de cel aventure qu'il avoit le jour veues
 (sic) que il ne savoit preu consillier. Et en chou qu'il estoit si pensis etc. 28-29
 know I well . . . of all thy thoughtes stands for the French tu ne penses chose que
 je ne sache (Huth Merlin, f. 77c) 29 C art but a foole 30 C it wyll

were begotyn: for kynge Uther was thy fadir and begate the on Igrayne.'

'That ys false!' seyde kynge Arthure. 'How sholdist thou know hit, for thou arte nat so olde of yerys to know
5 my fadir?'

'Yes,' seyde Merlyon, 'I know hit bettir than ye or ony man lyvyng.'

'I woll nat beleve the,' seyde Arthure, and was wrothe with the chylde.

10 So departed Merlyon, and com ayen in the lyknesse of an olde man of four score yere of ayge, whereof the kynge was passyng glad, for he semed to be ryght wyse. Than seyde the olde man, 'Why ar ye so sad?'

'I may well be sad,' seyde Arthure, 'for many thynges.
15 For ryght now there was a chylde here, and tolde me many thynges that mesemythe he sholde nat knowe, for he was nat of ayge to know my fadir.'

'Yes,' seyde the olde man, 'the chylde tolde you trouthe, and more he wolde a tolde you and [y]e wolde a suffirde
20 hym. But ye have done a thyng late that God ys displeased with you, for ye have lyene by youre syster and on hir ye
18^r have gotyn a childe that shall destroy you and all the knyghtes of youre realme.'

'What ar ye,' seyde Arthure, 'that telle me thys tydyngis?'
25 'Sir, I am Merlion, and I was he in the chyldis lycknes.'

'A,' seyde the kynge, 'ye ar a mervaylous man! But I mervayle muche of thy wordis that I mou dye in batayle.'

'Mervayle nat,' seyde Merlion, 'for hit ys Goddis wyllle that youre body sholde be punysshed for your fowle dedis.
30 But I ought ever to be hevvy,' seyde Merlion, 'for I shall dye a shamefull dethe, to be putte in the erthe quykke; and ye shall dey a worshipfull dethe.'

And as they talked thus, com one with the kyngis horse, and so the kynge mownted on hys horse, and Merlion on
35 anothir, and so rode unto Carlyon. And anone the kynge askyd Ector and Ulphuns how he was begotyn, and they

1 C begoten kynge Vtherpendragon was thy fader

12 C was ryght glad

14-15 wel be heuy said . . . thynges Also here was a chylde and told

19 W

and he wolde

24-5 C these tydynges I am

27 W mou dye

C mote dye

28-9 C wyll youre body to be punysshed

30 C but I may

wel be sory said Merlyn

33 C talked this† cam

tolde hym how kynge Uther was hys fadir, and quene Igrayne hys modir. 'So Merlion tolde me. I woll that my modir be sente for, that I myght speke with hir. And if she sey so hirselff, than woll I beleve hit.' So in all haste the quene was sente for, and she brought with hir Morgan 5 le Fay, hir doughter, that was a fayre lady as ony myght be. And the kynge welcommed Igrayne in the beste maner.

Ryght so com in Ulphuns and seyde opynly, that the (21) kynge and all myght hyre that were fested that day, 'Ye ar the falsyst lady of the worde, and the moste traytours 10 unto the kynges person.'

'Beware,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'what thou seyste: thou spekiste a grete worde.'

'Sir, I am well ware,' seyde Ulphuns, 'what I speke, and here ys my gloove to preve hit uppon ony man that woll 15 sey the contrary: that thys quene Igrayne ys the causer of youre grete damage and of youre grete warre, for and she wolde have uttirde hit in the lyff of Uther of the birth of you, and how ye were begotyn, than had ye never had the mortall warrys that ye have had. For the moste party of 20 your barownes of youre realme knewe never whos sonne ye were, ne of whom ye were begotyn; and she that bare you of hir body sholde have made hit knowyn opynly, in excusynge of hir worship and youre, and in lyke [wyse] to all the realme. Wherefore I preve hir false to God and to 25 you and to all youre realme. And who woll sey the contrary, I woll preve hit on hys body.'

Than spake Igrayne and seyde, 'I am a woman and I may nat fyght; but rather than I sholde be dishonoured, there wolde som good man take my quarell. But,' thus she seyde, 30 'Merlion knowith well, and ye, sir Ulphuns, how kynge Uther com to me into the castell of Tyntagyl in the lyknes 18^v of my lorde that was dede thre owres tofore, and there begate a chylde that nyght uppon me, and aftir the thirteenth day kynge Uther wedded me. And by his commaunde- 35 mente, whan the chylde was borne, hit was delyvirde unto

1 *C* how *not in C* 2-3 *C* moder thenne he sayd to Merlyn I wylle that my moder
5 *C* and she cam & broughte 6 *C* was as fayre a lady as 8 *C* cam Vlffys
14 *Sir not in C* 19 than had *not in C* 19 *W* than had ye
had nev(er) had 24 *W* in lyke to *C* in lyke wyse to 30-1 quarel More she
sayd Merlyn 32 *C* Tyntagaill 33-4 *C*† and therby gat a child

Merlion and fostred by hym. And so I saw the childe never aftir, nothir wote nat what ys hys name; for I knew hym never yette.'

Than Ulphuns seyde unto Merlion, 'Ye ar than more
5 to blame than the queene.'

'Sir, well I wote I bare a chylde be my lorde kynge Uther, but I wote never where he ys becom.'

Than the kynge toke Merlion by the honde seying thys wordis: 'Ys this my modir?'

10 'Forsothe, sir, yee.'

And therewith com in sir Ector, and bare wytnes how he fostred hym by kynge Uthers commaundemente. And therewith kyng Arthure toke his modir, quene Igrayne, in hys armys and kyssed her, and eythir wepte uppon other.

15 Than the kynge lete make a feste that lasted eyght dayes.

So on a day there com into the courte a squire on horsebacke ledynge a knyght tofore hym, wounded to the deth, and tolde how there was a knyght in the foreste that had rered up a pavylon by a welle, 'that hath slayne my mayster,
20 a good knyght: hys name was Myles. Wherefore I besech you that my maystir may be buried, and that som knyght may revenge my maystirs dethe.' Than the noyse was grete of that knyghtes dethe in the courte, and every man seyde hys advyce.

25 Than com Gryfflet that was but a squire, and he was but yonge, of 'the ayge of the kyng Arthur'. So he besought the kynge for all hys servyse that he had done hym to gyff hym the Order of Knyghthoode.

(22) 'Thou arte but yonge and tendir of ayge,' seyd kynge

30 Arthure, 'for to take so hyghe an orde[r] uppon you.'

'Sir,' seyde Gryfflett, 'I beseche you to make me knyght.'

'Sir,' seyde Merlion, 'hit were pité to lose Gryfflet, for he woll be a passynge good man whan he ys of ayge, and he

1 C and nourysshed by hym 3-6 C yet And there Vlffus saide to the quene Merlyn is more to blame than ye wel I wote said the quene I bare 7 C wote not where 8-12 C thenne Merlyn toke the kynge by the hand sayeng this is your moder and therewith syr Ector bare wytnes how he nourysshed hym *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 84c) Lors prent Artu par le brach et li dist: 'Artu . . . la roine Ygerne est ta mere' 19 C and hath slayne 20 C mylis 26 *W* of ayge so he *C** but yonge of the age of the kyng Arthur soo he *F* (f. 86a) estoit de l'aage le roi Artu. 29 C arte full yong 32 C were grete pyte 33—p. 47, 1 C age abydyng with yow

shall abyde with you the terme of hys lyff. And if he aventure his body with yondir knyght at the fountayne, hit ys in grete perell if ever he com agayne, for he ys one of the beste knyghtes of the worlde and the strengyst man of armys.'

'Well,' seyde Arthure, 'at thyne owne desire thou shalt be made knyght.' 'So at the desyre of Gryfflet the kynge made hym knyght.'

'Now,' seyde Arthure unto Gryfflet, 'sith I have made the knyght, thou muste gyff me a gyffte.'

'What ye woll,' seyde Gryfflet.

'Thou shalt promyse me by thy feyth of thy body, whan thou haste justed with that knyght at the fountayne, whether hit falle ye be on horsebak othir on foote, that ryght so ye shall com agayne unto me withoute makynge ony more debate.'

'I woll promyse you,' seyde Gryfflet, 'as youre desire ys.'

Than toke Gryfflet hys horse in grete haste and dressed hys shelde and toke a spere in hys honde, and so he rode a grete walop tyll he com to the fountain. And thereby he saw a ryche pavilion, and thereby undir a cloth stood an horse well sadeled and brydyled, and on a tre hynged a shelde of dyvers coloures, and a grete spere thereby. Than Gryfflet smote on the shylde with the butte of hys spere, that the shylde felle downe.

With that the knyght com oute of the pavilion and seyde, 'Fayre knyght, why smote ye downe my shylde?'

'Sir, for I wolde juste with you,' seyde Gryfflet.

'Sir, hit ys bettir ye do nat,' seyde the kynge, 'for ye ar but yonge and late made knyght, and youre myght ys nat to myne.'

'As for that,' seyde Gryfflet, 'I woll joust with you.'

'That ys me loth,' seyde the knyght, 'but sitthyn I muste nedis, I woll dresse me thereto. Of whens be ye?' seyde the knyght.

6-7 at thyne owne desire thou shalt be made knyght *not in C* 7-8 *C** so at the desyre of gryfflet the kynge made hym knyght *F A l'endemain fist Gifflet li rois Artus chevalier (ibid., f. 87a).* 13 *C* the knyght 16 *C* as yow desyre 21-2 *C* stode a fayr hors 22 hynged *not in C* 23 thereby *not in C* 25-6 *C* doune to the ground with that 27-8 *C* sheld for I wil 29 Sir *not in C* *C* doo not sayd the knyghte 30-1 *C* is nothyng to myn

'Sir, I am of kynge Arthurs courte.'

So the two knyghtes ran togydir, that Gryfflettis spere all to-shevirde. And therewithall he smote Gryfflet thorow the shelde and the lyffte syde, and brake the spere, that the
5 truncheon stake in hys body, and horse and man felle downe to the erthe.

- (23) Whan the knyght saw hym ly so on the grounde he alyght and was passyng hevy, for he wente he had slayne hym. And than he unlaced hys helme and gate hym wynde; and
10 so with the troncheon he sette hym on his horse and gate hym wynde, and so betoke hym to God and seyde, 'He had a myghty herte!' And seyde, 'If he myght lyve, he wolde preve a passyng good knyght,' and so rode forthe sir Gryfflet unto the courte, whereof passyng grete dole was
15 made for hym. But thorow good lechis he was heled and saved.

Ryght so com into the courte twelve knyghtes that were aged men, whiche com frome the Emperoure of Rome. And they asked of Arthure trwage for hys realme, othir ellis the
20 Emperour wolde destroy hym and all hys londe.

- 'Well,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'ye ar messyngers: therefore ye may sey what ye woll, othir ellis ye sholde dye therefore. But thys ys myne answer: I owghe the Emperour no
19^v trewage, nother none woll I yelde hym, but on a fayre fylde
25 I shall yelde hym my trwage, that shall be with a sherpe spere othir ellis with a sherpe swerde. And that shall nat be longe, be my fadirs soule Uther!' And therewith the messyngers departed passyngly wrothe, and kyng Arthure as wrothe; for in an evyll tyme com they.

- 30 But the kynge was passyngly wrothe for the hurte of sir Gryfflet, and so he commaunded a prevy man of hys chambir that or hit were day his beste horse and armoure 'and all that longith to my person be withoute the cité or to-morow day'. Ryght so he mette with his man and his horse,
35 and so mownted up, and dressed his shelde and toke hys

5-7 *C* body that hors and knyghte fyller doune Capitulum XXIII Than the knyght
12 *C* hert and yf he 14 *C* court where grete 17-18 *C* & were aged men
and they cam 19 *C* for this realme 20 all *not in C* 24 *C* will I hold hym
25 *C* shall yeue hym 29-30 *C* cam they thenne for the kyng 32 *C* hit be day
32-3 *C* armour with all that longeth vnto his person 34 *C* Ryght so or to
morow day he met

spere, and bade hys chambir layne tary there tyll he com agayne.

And so Arthure rode a soffte pace tyll hit was day. And than was he ware of thre chorlys chasyng Merlion and wolde have slayne hym. Than the kynge rode unto them and bade hem: 'Fle, chorlis!' Than they fered sore whan they sawe a knyght com, and fledde.

'A, Merlion!' seyde Arthure, 'here haddist thou be slayne for all thy crafftis, had nat I bene.'

'Nay,' seyde Merlyon, 'nat so, for I cowde a saved myselfe and I had wolde. But thou arte more nere thy deth than I am, for thou goste to thy dethe warde, and God be nat thy frende.'

So as they wente thus talkyng, they com to the fountayne and the ryche pavilion there by hit. Than kynge Arthure was ware where sate a knyght armed in a chayre.

'Sir knyght,' seyde Arthure, 'for what cause abydist thou here, that there may no knyght ryde thys way but yf he juste with the? I rede the to leve that custom.'

'Thys custom,' seyde the knyght, 'have I used and wold use magré who seyth nay. And who that ys agreved with my custum lette hym amende hit.'

'That shall I amende,' seyde Arthure.

'And I shall defende the,' seyde the knyght. And anone he toke hys horse, and dressed hys shelde and toke a grete spere in hys honde, and they come togydir so harde that eythir smote other in mydde the shyldis, that all to-shevird theire speris.

Therewith anone Arthure pulled oute his swerde.

'Nay, nat so,' seyde the knyght, 'hit ys bettir that we twayne renne more togydirs with sherpe sperys.'

'I wold well,' seyde Arthure, 'and I had ony mo sperys here.'

6 C thenne were they aferd whan 7 com *not in C* 10-11 C coude save my self and I wold 12 C to the deth ward 19-20 C wyth the said the kynge I rede the leue that custome said Arthur This customme 21 C & who is 22-3 C amende hit that wol I wil amende it said Arthur 24 W Hand in margin pointing to l. 24 25 grete *not in C* 26 in hys honde *not in C* 26-8 C they met so hard either in others sheldes that al to sheuered their sperys† 30 C said the knyght it is fayrer sayd the knyght that we 32 C ii good sperys *Misprint in S* (in good sperys).

'I have inow,' seyde the knyght.

So there com a squyre and brought forth the two sperys,
and Arthure chose one and he another. So they spurred
20^r theire horsis and come togydir with all theire myghtes, that
5 eyther brake their sperys to their hondis. Than Arthure
sette honde on his swerde.

'Nay,' seyde the knyght, 'ye shall do bettir. Ye ar a
passyng good juster as ever y mette withall, and onys for
the hyghe Order of Knyghthode lette us jouste agayne.'

10 'I assente me,' seyde Arthure.

And anone there was brought forth two grete sperys, and
anone every knyght gate a spere; and therewith they ran
togiders, that Arthures spere all to-shevirde. But this other
knyght smote hym so harde in myddis the shelde that horse
15 and man felle to the erthe. And therewith Arthure was egir,
and pulde oute hys swerde, and seyde,

'I woll assay the, sir knyght, on foote, for I have loste
the honoure on horsebacke,' seyde the kynge.

'Sir, I will be on horsebacke styll to assay the.'

20 Than was Arthure wrothe and dressed his shelde to-
warde hym with his swerde drawyn. Whan the knyght saw
that he alyght, for hym thought no worship to have a knyght
at such avayle, he to be on horsebacke and hys adversary on
foote, and so he alyght and dressed his shelde unto Arthure.

25 And there began a stronge batayle with many grete strokis,
and so they hew with hir swerdis, that the cantels flowe unto
the feldys, and mucche bloode they bledde bothe, that all
the place theareas they fought was ovirbledde with bloode.
And thus they fought longe and rested them. And than
30 they went to the batayle agayne, and so hurteled togydys
lyke too rammes that aythir felle to the erthe. So at the laste
they smote togyders, that bothe hir [swerdys] mette evyn
togyders. But kynge Arthurs swerde brake in two pecis,
wherfore he was hevy.

35 Than seyde the knyght unto Arthure, 'Thou arte in my
daungere, whethir me lyste to save the or sle the; and but

8-9 *C* ones for the loue of the hyghe . . . Iuste ones ageyn 12 anone *not in C*
14 *C* hyt hym . . . myddes of the shelde 18-20 *C* horsbak I will be on horsbak
said the knyght thenne wast 23-4 *C* horsbak and he on foot 26 *C* they
not in C† 32 *W* hir mette *C** her swerdys met 33 *C* But the swerd of the
knyght smote kyng arthurs swerd in two pyeces

thou yelde the to me as overcom and recreaunte, thou shalt dey.'

'As for that,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'dethe ys wellcom to me whan hit commyth. But to yelde me unto the I woll nat!'

And therewithall the kynge lepte unto kynge Pellynore, and toke hym by the myddyll, and overthrew hym, and raced of hys helme. So whan the knyght felte that, he was adradde, for he was a passynge bygge man of myght. And so forthe-with he wrothe Arthure undir hym and raced of hys helme, 10 and wolde have smytten off hys hede.

And therewithall com Merlion and seyde, 'Knyght, (24) holde thy honde, for and thou sle that knyght thou puttyst 20^v thys realme in the gretteste damage that evir was realme: for thys knyght ys a man of more worshyp than thou 15 wotist off.'

'Why, what ys he?' seyde the knyght.

'For hit ys kynge Arthure,' seyde Merlyon.

Than wolde he have slayne hym for drede of hys wratthe, and so he lyffte up hys swerde. And therewith Merlion 20 caste an inchauntemente on the knyght, that he felle to the erthe in a grete slepe. Than Merlion toke up kynge Arthure and rode forthe on the knyghtes horse.

'Alas!' seyde Arthure, 'what hast thou do, Merlion? Hast thou slayne thys good knyght by thy craufftis? For 25 there lyvith nat so worshipfull a knyght as he was. For I had levir than the stynte of my londe a yere that he were on lyve.'

'Care ye nat,' seyde Merlion, 'for he ys holer than ye: he ys but on slepe and woll awake within thys owre. I 30 tolde you,' seyde Merlyon, 'what a knyght he was. Now here had ye be slayne had I nat bene. Also there lyvith nat a bygger knyght than he ys one; and afftir this he shall do

1 to me *not in C* 3-4 *C* as for deth^t said kyng arthur welcome be it whan it
4-6 *C* vnto the as recreaunt I had leuer deye than to be soo shamed And ther
with al 6 *C* vnto Pellinore 7 *C* and threwe hym doune and 9-10 *C*
myghte and anone he broughte Arthur 18 For *not in C* seyde
Merlyon *not in C* 19-20 *C* wrathe and heue vp his 21 *C* to the knyght
25, 26 For *not in C* 30 *C* for he ys bu *C* within thre houres
No mention of time in F. 31 Now *not in C* 33—p. 52, 1 *C* and he shal
here after do yow ryght gaod seruyse

you goode servyse. And hys name ys kynge Pellinore, and he shall have two sonnes that shall be passyng good men as ony lyvyng: save one in thys worlde they shall have no felowis of prouesse and of good lyvyng, and hir
 5 namys shall be Percyvall and sir Lamerake of Walis. And he shall telle you the name of youre owne son begotyn of youre syster, that shall be the destruccion of all thys realme.'

(25) Ryght so the kynge and he departed and wente unto an
 10 ermytage, and there was a good man and a grete leche. So the ermyte serched the kynges woundis and gaff hym good salves. And so the kyng was there three dayes, and than wer his woundis well amended, that he myght ryde and goo; and so departed.

15 And as they rode, kynge Arthur seyde, 'I have no swerde.'

'No force,' seyde Merlyon, 'hereby ys a swerde that shall be youre, and I may.'

So they rode tyll they com to a laake that was a fayre
 20 watir and brode. And in the myddis Arthure was ware of an arme clothed in whyght samyte, that helde a fayre swerde in that honde.

'Lo,' seyde Merlion, 'yondir ys the swerde that I spoke off.'

25 So with that they saw a damesell goynge uppon the laake. 'What damoyssel is that?' said Arthur.

'That is the Lady of the Lake,'¹ seyde Merlion. 'There ys a grete roche, and therein ys as fayre a paleyce as ony on
 21^r 30 erthe, and rychely besayne. And thys damesel woll come to you anone, and than speke ye fayre to hir, that she may gyff you that swerde.'

So anone com this damesel to Arthure and salewed hym, and he hir agayne.

'Damesell,' seyde Arthure, 'what swerde ys that yondir

1 kynge *not in C* 5 *C* Persyual of walys & Lamerak of walys 9-10 *C* went vn tyl an ermyte that was a good 11 *C* serched all his woundys 19 *C* lake the whiche was a fayr 20 *C* myddes of the lake Arthur 22-3 *C* that swerd
 25-8 *W* uppon the laake seyde M *C* vpon the lake what damoyssel is that said Arthur that is the lady of the lake said Merlyn And within that lake is a roche (*homoeoteleuton in W*) 28 *C*† a place as *F* palais grans et miervilleus
 30 *W* speke speke *C* she will gyue 34 *C* that that yonder

that the arme holdith aboven the watir? I wolde hit were myne, for I have no swerde.'

'Sir Arthure,' seyde the damesel, 'that swerde ys myue, and if ye woll gyff me a gyffte whan I aske hit you, ye shall have hit.'

'Be my feyth,' seyde Arthure, 'I woll gyff you what gyffte that ye woll aske.'

'Well,' seyde the damesell, 'go ye into yondir barge, and rowe yourselffe to the swerde, and take hit and the scawberde with you. And I woll aske my gyffte whan I se my tyme.'

So kynge Arthure and Merlion alyght and tyed their horsis unto two treys; and so they wente into the barge. And whan they come to the swerde that the honde hylde, than kynge Arthure toke hit up by the hondils and bare hit with hym, and the arme and the honde wente undir the watir. And so he com unto the londe and rode forthe.

And kynge Arthure saw a ryche pavilion.

'What signifieth yondir pavilion?'

'Sir, that ys the knyghtes pavilys that ye fought with laste, sir Pellynore; but he ys oute. He ys nat at home, for he hath had ado with a knyght of youres that hyght Egglame, and they had foughtyn togyddyr; but at the laste Egglame fledde, and ellis he had bene dede, and he hath chaced hym evyn to Carlion. And we shall mete with hym anone in the hygheway.'

'That ys well seyde,' seyde Arthure. 'Now have I a swerde I woll wage batayle with hym and be avenged on hym.'

'Sir,' seyde Merlion, 'nat so; for the knyght ys wery of fyghtynge and chasyng, that ye shall have no worship to have ado with hym. Also he woll nat lyghtly be macched of one knyght lvyng, and therefore hit ys my counceile: latte hym passe, for he shall do you good servyse in shorte tyme, and hys sonnes afftir hys dayes. Also ye shall se that

3 C Syr Arthur kynge said the 12-13 C the horses 4-14 W (sidenote):
 Here ys a mencion of the Lady of the Laake whan she asked Balyne le saveage his
 hede 13-14 C the ship & 15-16 C handels & toke hit with hym 20 C knyghtes
 pavilion seid merlyn p^t 21-2 C he is not there he hath adoo 23 C & they
 haue fouzten 23 Misprint in S (al the last) 28 C swerd now will I
 30 C ye shal not so 31 C so that

day in shorte space that ye shall be ryght glad to gyff hym youre syster to wedde for hys good servyse. Therefore have nat ado with hym whan ye se hym.'

'I woll do as ye avise me.'

5 Than kynge Arthure lokod on the swerde and lyked hit passynge well. Than seyde Merlion,

'Whethir lyke ye better the swerde othir the scawberde?'

'I lyke bettir the swerde,' seyde Arthure.

21^v 10 'Ye ar the more unwyse, for the scawberde ys worth ten of the swerde; for whyles ye have the scawberde uppon you, ye shall lose no blood, be ye never so sore wounded. Therefore kepe well the scawberde allweyes with you.'

So they rode unto Carlion; and by the wey they mette with kynge Pellinore. But Merlion had done suche a
15 crauffte unto kynge Pellinore saw nat kynge Arthure, and so passed by withoute ony wordis.

'I mervayle,' seyde Arthure, 'that the knyght wold nat speke.'

20 'Sir, he saw you nat; for had he seyne you, ye had nat lyghtly parted.'

So they com unto Carlion, wherof hys knyghtes were passynge glad. And whan they herde of hys adventures, they mervayled that he wolde joupardé his person so alone. But all men of worship seyde hit was myrry to be under
25 such a chyffayne that wolde putte hys person in adventure as other poure knyghtis ded.

(27) So thys meanewhyle com a messyngere frome kynge Royns of Northe Walis, and kynge he was of all Irelande and of Iles. And this was hys message, gretynge well kyng
30 Arthure on thys maner of wyse, sayng that kynge Royns had discomfite and overcom eleven kyngis, and every of them dud hym omage. And that was thus to sey they gaff theire beardes clene flayne off, as much as was bearde; wherefore the messyngere com for kynge Arthures berde.
35 For kynge Royns had purfild a mantell with kynges

1 C space ye shal 2-5 C† to wedde Whan I see hym I wil doo as ye aduyse me
sayd Arthur Thenne 9 C vnwyse sayd Merlyn for 15 C crafte that
pellinore saw 19-20 C syr said Merlyn he . . . lyghtly departed 27 *Wrong*
chapter number in C. See note on p. 6 28 C Ryons 29 C many Iles
31-2 C eueryche of hem 32-3 C And that was this they gaf hym their berdys
33-4 C as moche as ther was wher for

berdis, and there lacked one place of the mantell; wherefore he sente for hys bearde, othir ellis he wolde entir into his londis and brenne and sle, and nevir leve tylle he hathe the hede and the bearde bothe.

'Well,' seyde Arthure, 'thou haste seyde thy message, 5 the whych ys the moste orgulus and lewdiste message that evir man had isente unto a kynge. Also thou mayste se my bearde ys full yonge yet to make off a purphile. But telle thou thy kynge thus, that I owghe hym [none homage] ne none of myne elders; but or hit be longe to, he shall do 10 me omage on bothe his knees, other ellis he shall lese hys hede, by the fayth of my body! For thys ys the moste shamefullyste message that ever y herde speke off. I have aspyed thy kynge never yette mette with worshipfull man. But telle hym I woll have hys hede withoute he do me 15 omage.'

Than thys messyngere departed.

'Now ys there ony here that knowyth kynge Royns?'

Than answerde a knyght that hyght Naram: 'Sir, I know the kynge well: he ys a passyng good man of hys body as 20 fewe bene lyvyng and a passyng proude man. And, sir, doute ye nat he woll make on you a myghty puyssaunce.'

'Well,' seyde Arthure, 'I shall ordayne for hym in shorte 22^r tyme.'

Than kynge Arthure lette sende for all the children that 25 (28) were borne in May-day, begotyn of lordis and borne of ladyes; for Merlyon tolde kynge Arthure that he that sholde destroy hym and all the londe sholde be borne on May-day. Wherefore he sente for hem all in payne of dethe, and so there were founde many lordis sonnys and many knyghtes 30 sonnes, and all were sente unto the kynge. And so was Mordred sente by kynge Lottis wyff. And all were putte in a shyppe to the se; and som were four wekis olde and som lesse. And so by fortune the shyppe drove unto a castelle,

2 *W* he he sente 3-4 *C* haue the 4 bothe *not in C* 6 *C* most vylaynoust
F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 95d): dist qu'il n'oi onques mais parler de si fol mandement ne de
 si orgilleus come chis li mande 7 *C* man herd sente 8 *C* make a pursyl of hit
 But 9-10 *W* hym ne none *C* hym none homage ne none 18 *C* ony
 here said Arthure that 22 *C* make warre on yow with a myghty 25-6 *C*
 childre born on may day 28 and all the londe *not in C* 30-1 and many
 knyghtes sonnes *not in C*

and was all to-ryven and destroyed the moste party, save that Mordred was cast up, and a good man founde hym, and fostird hym tylle he was fourtene yere of age, and than brought hym to the courte, as hit rehersith aftirward and
 5 towarde the ende of the MORTE ARTHURE.

So, many lordys and barownes of thys realme were displeased for hir children were so loste; and many putte the wyght on Merlion more than of Arthure. So what for drede and for love, they helde their pece.

10 But whan the messynge com to the kyng Royns, than was he woode oute of mesure, and purveyde hym for a grete oste, as hit rehersith aftir in the BOOKE OF BALYNE LE SAVEAGE that folowith nexte aftir: that was the adventure how Balyne gate the swerde.

3 *C* and nourysshed hym tyl *C* yere olde & thenne 4-5 *W* aftirward and towarde and towarde the ende of the morte Arthure. *C* afterward toward the ende of the deth of Arthur 8 *C* than on Arthur 10 *C* the messenger camme 13-14 *C* next after how by aduenture Balyn gat the swerd EXPLICIT LIBER PRIMUS INCIPIT LIBER SECUNDUS *W* the swerde after *The last word belongs to the next sentence: Aftir the deth etc. In the manuscript used by the scribe of W this was probably the end of a page, and after was inserted as a catchword.*

II
BALYN LE SAUVAGE
OR
THE KNIGHT WITH THE TWO SWORDS

[*Winchester MS.*, ff^o 22^r–34^r;
Caxton, Book II]

CAXTON'S RUBRICS

- Ch. 1. Of a damoyssel whyche came gyrde wyth a swerde for to fynde a man of suche vertue to drawe it oute of the scabard.
- „ 2. How Balen arayed lyke a poure knyght pulled out the swerde whyche afterward was cause of his deth.
- „ 3. How the Lady of the Lake demaunded the knyghtes heed that had wonne the swerde, or the maydens hede.
- „ 4. How Merlyn tolde th'adventure of this damoyssel.
- „ 5. How Balyn was pursyewed by syr Launceor, knyght of Irelande, and how he justed and slewe hym.
- „ 6. How a damoyssel which was love to Launceor slewe hyrself for love, and how Balyn mette wyth his brother Balan.
- „ 7. How a dwarfe reprevyd Balyn for the deth of Launceor, and how kyng Marke of Cornewayl founde them and maad a tombe over them.
- „ 8. How Merlyn prophecied that two the best knyghtes of the world shold fyght there, whyche were syr Launcelot and syr Trystram.
- „ 9. How Balyn and his broder by the counceyl of Merlyn toke kyng Ryons and brought hym to kyng Arthur.
- „ 10. How kyng Arthur had a bataylle ayenst Nero and kyng Loth of Orkeney, and how kyng Loth was deceyved by Merlyn, and how twelve kynges were slayne.
- „ 11. Of the enterement of twelve kynges and of the prophecye of Merlyn how Balyn should gyve the dolorous stroke.
- „ 12. How a sorouful knyght cam tofore Arthur and how Balyn fet hym, and how that knyght was slayn by a knyght invysyble.
- „ 13. How Balyn and the damoyssel mette wyth a knyght whych was in lyke wyse slayn, and how the damoyssel bledde for the custom of a castel.
- „ 14. Ho(w) Balyn mette wyth that knyght named Garlon at a feest and there he slewe hym to have his blood to hele therwith the sone of his hoost.
- „ 15. How Balyn fought wyth kyng Pelham and how his swerde brake, and how he gate a spere werewyth he smote the dolorous stroke.
- „ 16. How Balyn was delyverd by Merlyn and savyd a knyght that wold have slayn hymself for love.
- „ 17. How that knyght slewe his love and a knyght lyeng by hyr, and after how he slewe hymself wyth his owne swerde, and how Balyn rode toward a castel where he lost his lyf.

- „ 18. How Balyn mette wyth his brother Balen and how eche of theym slewe other unknowen tyl they were wounded to deth.
- „ 19. How Merlyn buryed hem bothe in one tombe, and of Balyns swerd.

AFFTIR the deth of Uther regned Arthure, hys son, which (1)
had grete warre in hys dayes for to gete all Inglonde
into hys honde; for there were many kyngis within the
realme of Inglonde and of Scotlonde, Walys and Cornu-
wayle.

So hit befelle on a tyme whan kynge Arthure was at 5
London, ther com a knyght and tolde the kynge tydyngis
how the kynge Royns of Northe Walis had rered a grete
numbir of peple and were entred in the londe and brente
and slew the kyngis trew lyege people. 10

'Iff thys be trew,' seyde Arthure, 'hit were grete shame
unto myne astate but that he were myghtyly withstonde.'

'Hit ys trouthe,' seyde the knyght, 'for I saw the oste
myselff.'

'Well,' seyde the kynge, 'I shall ordayne to wythstonde 15
hys malice.'

Than the kynge lette make a cry that all the lordis,
knyghtes and jantilmen of armys sholde draw unto the
castell called Camelot in tho dayes, and there the kynge
wolde lette make a counceile generall and a grete justis. 20
So whan the kynge was com thidir with all his baron- 22v
age and logged as they semed beste, also there was com
'a damoisel' the which was sente frome the grete Lady
Lyle of Avilion. And whan she com before kynge Arthure
she tolde fro whens she com, and how she was sente on 25
message unto hym for thys causis. Than she lette hir
mantell falle that was rychely furred, and than was she
gurde with a noble swerde whereof the kynge had mervayle
and seyde, 'Damesel, for what cause ar ye gurte with that
swerde? Hit besemyth you nought.'

'Now shall I telle you,' seyde the damesell. 'Thys swerde 30

4-5 C Englonde and in walys Scotland and Cornewaille 15-17 I shall ordayne
... Than the kynge *not in C†* 18-19 C vnto a castel 19 W called Camelot
called in tho 22 also *not in C* 22-4 W was com the which was sente
frome the grete lady lyle of Avilion C* was come a damoisel the whiche was sente
on message from the grete lady lyle of auelyon F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 99c): vint laiens
une damoisele riche et de grant biauté plainne, et est (*sic*) la dame apielee la dame
de l'isle Avalon. Si dist au roi: 'A toi m'envoie, rois, ma dame de l'isle Avalon,'
etc. 25 C told from whome she

that I am gurte withall doth me grete sorow and comber-
 aunce, for I may nat be delyverde of thys swerde but by
 a knyght, and he muste be a passyng good man of hys
 hondys and of hys dedis, and withoute velony other trechory
 5 and withoute treson. And if I may fynde such a knyght
 that hath all thes vertues he may draw oute thys swerde
 oute of the sheethe. For I have bene at kynges Royns, for
 hit was tolde me there were passyng good knyghtes; and he
 and all his knyghtes hath assayde and none can spede.'

10 'Thys ys a grete mervayle,' seyde Arthure. 'If thys be
 sothe I woll assay myselffe to draw oute the swerde, nat
 presumyng myselffe that I am the beste knyght; but I woll
 begynne to draw youre swerde in gyvyng an insample to
 all the barownes, that they shall assay everych one aftir
 15 othir whan I have assayde.' Than Arthure toke the swerde
 by the sheethe and gurdil and pulled at hit egerly, but the
 swerde wolde nat oute.

'Sir,' seyde the damesell, 'ye nede nat for to pulle halffe
 so sore, for he that shall pulle hit oute shall do hit with
 20 litill myght.'

'Ye sey well,' seyde Arthure. 'Now assay ye all, my
 barownes.'

'But beware ye be nat defoyled with shame, trechory,
 nother gyle, for than hit woll nat awayle,' seyde the damesel,
 25 'for he muste be a clene knyght withoute vylony and of
 jantill strene of fadir syde and of modir syde.'

The moste parte of all the barownes of the Rounde Table
 that were there at that tyme assayde all be rew, but there
 myght none spede. Wherefore the damesel made grete
 30 sorow oute of mesure and seyde, 'Alas! I wente in this
 courte had bene the beste knyghtes of the worlde withoute
 trechory other treson.'

'Be my faythe,' seyde Arthure, 'here ar good knyghtes
 as I deme as ony be in the worlde, but their grace ys nat
 23^r 35 to helpe you, wherefore I am sore displeased.'

(2) Than hit befelle so that tyme there was a poore knyght
 with kynges Arthure that had bene presonere with hym

9 C knyghtes haue assayed it and

drawe at your

Moost of all

19 C so hard for

31 C of the worlde *not in C*

12 C presumyng vpon my self

25-6 C of a gentil strene

35 sore *not in C*

13 C

26-7 C syde

half a yere for sleynge of a knyght which was cosyne unto kyng Arthure. And the name of thys knyght was called Balyne, and by good meanys of the barownes he was delyverde oute of preson, for he was a good man named of his body, and he was borne in Northehumbirlonde. And so he wente pryvaly into the courte and saw thys adventure whereoff hit reysed his herte, and wolde assayde as othir knyghtes ded. But for he was poore and poorly arayde, he put hymself nat far in prees. But in hys herte he was fully assured to do as well if hys grace happed hym as ony knyght that there was. And as the damesell toke [her] leve of Arthure and of all the barownes, so departynge, thys knyght Balyn called unto her and seyde,

'Damesell, I pray you of youre curteysy suffir me as well to assay as thes other lordis. Thoughe that I be pourely arayed yet in my herte mesemyth I am fully assured as som of thes other, and mesemyth in myne herte to spede ryght welle.'

Thys damesell than behelde thys poure knyght and saw he was a lyckly man; but for hys poure araymente she thought he sholde nat be of no worship withoute vylony or trechory. And than she seyde unto that knyght,

'Sir, hit nedith nat you to put me to no more payne, for hit semyth nat you to spede thereas all thes othir knyghtes have fayled.'

'A, fayre damesell,' seyde Balyn, 'worthynes and good tacchis and also good dedis is nat only in araymente, but manhode and worship [ys hyd] within a mannes person; and many a worshipfull knyght ys nat knowyn unto all peple. And therefore worship and hardynesse ys nat in araymente.'

'Be God,' seyde the damesell, 'ye sey soth, therefore ye shall assay to do what ye may.' Than Balyn toke the swerde by the gurdyll and shethe and drew hit oute easily. And whan he loked on the swerde hit pleased hym muche.

3 C Balen 5 C northumberland 7 C wolde assaye it as 12 W toke
p(er) leue C* toke her leue 14-19 W (sidenote) Vertue and manhode ys hyed
wythin the bodye 15-16 C be so pourely clothed in my 19 C The
damoysele C the poure knyght 21 nat not in C 23 C it nedith not to put
me to more payn or labour for 24-5 C there as other haue 28 W worship
w(i)t(h)in a mannes C* worship is hyd within mans (ys hyd is confirmed by
the sidenote in W, see note 14-19 above)

Than had the kynge and all the barownes grete mervayle that Balyne had done that aventure; many knyghtes had grete despite at hym.

'Sertes,' seyde the damesell, 'thys ys a passynge good
5 knyght and the beste that ever y founde, and moste of worship withoute treson, trechory, or felony. And many mervayles shall he do. Now, jantyll and curtayse knyght,
23^v geff me the swerde agayne.'

'Nay,' seyde Balyne, 'for thys swerde woll I kepe but hit
10 be takyn fro me with force.'

'Well,' seyde the damesell, 'ye ar nat wyse to kepe the swerde fro me, for ye shall sle with that swerde the beste frende that ye have and the man that ye moste love in the worlde, and that swerde shall be youre destruccion.'

15 'I shall take the aventure,' seyde Balyn, 'that God woll ordayne for me. But the swerde ye shall nat have at thys tyme, by the feythe of my body!'

'Ye shall repente hit within shorte tyme,' seyde the damesell, 'for I wolde have the swerde more for youre avauntage
20 than for myne; for I am passynge hevy for youre sake, for and ye woll nat leve that swerde hit shall be youre destruccion, and that ys grete pité.' So with that departed the damesell and grete sorow she made.

And anone afftir Balyn sente for hys horse and armoure,
25 and so wolde departe frome the courte, and toke his leve of kynge Arthure. 'Nay,' seyde the kynge, 'I suppose ye woll nat departe so lyghtly from thys felyship. I suppose that ye ar displeysd that I have shewed you unkyndnesse. But blame me the lesse, for I was mysseinformed ayenste
30 you: but I wente ye had nat bene such a knyght as ye ar of worship and prouesse. And if ye woll abyde in thys courte amonge my felyship, I shall so avaunce [you] as ye shall be pleased.'

'God thanke youre Hyghnesse,' seyde Balyne. 'Your
35 bounté may no man prayse halff unto the vawle, butt at thys

3 C despyte af Balen

19-20 C for your auaylle than

20-1 C your

sake For ye wil not byleue that swerd shal be

F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 100d): 'Et

je vous di, fait elle, que se vous l'emportés qu'il vous en mal averra'

22-24 C

pyte with that the damoyzel departed makynge grete sorowe Anone after

29 C

mys senformed

32 W avaunce as ye shall

C auaunce yow as ye shalle

35 C bounte and hyhenes may

tyme I muste nedis departe, besechynge you allway of youre good grace.'

'Truly,' seyde the kynge, 'I am ryght wroth of youre departynge. But I pray you, fayre knyght, that ye tarry nat longe frome me, and ye shall be ryght wellcom unto me ⁵ and to my barownes, and I shall amende all mysse that I have done agaynste you.'

'God thanke youre good grace,' seyde Balyn, and therewith made hym redy to departe. Than the moste party of the knyghtes of the Rounde Table seyde that Balyne dud ¹⁰ nat this adventure on^ly by myght but by wycchecraft.

So the meanwhyle that thys knyght was makynge hym ⁽³⁾ redy to departe, there com into the courte the Lady of the Laake, and she com on horsebacke rychely beseyne, and salewed kynge Arthure and there asked hym a gyffte that ¹⁵ he promysed her whan she gaff hym the swerde.

'That ys sothe,' seyde Arthure, 'a gyffte I promysed you, ^{24r} but I have forgotyn the name of my swerde that ye gaff me.'

'The name of hit,' seyde the lady, 'ys Excalibir, that ys as muche to sey as Kutte Stele.'

'Ye sey well,' seyde the kynge. 'Aske what ye woll and ye shall have hit and hit lye in my power to gyff hit.'

'Well,' seyde thys lady, 'than I aske the hede of thys knyght that hath wonne the swerde, othir ellis the damesels hede that brought hit. I take no force though I have both ²⁵ theire hedis: for he slew my brothir, a good knyght and a trew; and that jantillwoman was causer of my fadirs death.'

'Truly,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'I may nat graunte you nother of theire hedys with my worship; therefore aske what ye woll els, and I shall fulfille youre desire.'

'I woll aske none other thyng,' seyde the lady.

So whan Balyn was redy to departe, he saw the Lady of the Lake which by hir meanys had slayne hys modir; and he had sought hir three yere before. And whan hit was

⁵ frome me *not in C* ⁸ *C* thanke your grete lordship said ¹¹ *W* ony by myght *C** al only by *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 101b): dient li auquant qu'il savoit d'enchantement et qu'il l'a plus fait que par la prouece de lui (*Between the words fait and que the editors of the Huth Merlin interpolate par enchantement*) ¹² *W* whyle þt that that thys knyght ¹³⁻¹⁴ *C* a lady that hyght the lady of the lake ¹⁹ *C* Excalibur ³²⁻³ *W* saw the lady of the lady of the lake ³³ *C* slayne Balyns moder ³⁴ before *not in C*

tolde hym how she had asked hys hede of kynge Arthure, he wente to hir streyght and seyde, 'Evyll be [y]e founde: ye wolde have myne hede, and therefore ye shall loose youres!' And with hys swerde lyghtly he smote of hyr hede
 5 before kynge Arthure.

'Alas, for shame!' seyde the kynge. 'Why have ye do so? Ye have shamed me and all my courte, for thys lady was a lady that I was much beholdynge to, and hyder she com undir my sauffconduyghte. Therefore I shall never
 10 forgyff you that trespasse.'

'Sir,' seyde Balyne, 'me forthynkith of youre displeasure, for this same lady was the untrwyste lady lyvynge, and by inchauntement and by sorcery she hath bene the destroyer of many good knyghtes, and she was causer that my modir
 15 was brente thorow hir falsehode and trechory.'

'For what cause soever ye had,' seyde Arthure, 'ye sholde have forborne in my presence. Therefore thynke nat the contrary: ye shall repente hit, for such anothir despite had I nevir in my courte. Therefore withdraw you oute of my
 20 courte in all the haste that ye may.'

Than Balyn toke up the hede of the lady and bare hit with hym to hys ostry, and there mette with hys squyre that was sory he had displeased kynge Arthure, and so they rode forthe oute of towne.

25 'Now,' seyde Balyne, 'we muste departe; therefore take thou thys hede and bere hit to my frendis and telle hem how I have spedde, and telle hem in Northhumbirlonde how
 24 my moste foo ys dede. Also telle hem how I am oute of preson, and what adventure befelle me at the getynge of
 30 this swerde.'

'Alas!' seyde the squyre, 'ye ar gretly to blame for to displease kynge Arthure.'

'As for that,' seyde Balyne, 'I woll hyghe me in all [the] haste that I may [to] mete with kyng Royns and destroy

1 Chym that she asked 1-6 W (sidenote): The dethe of the Lady of the Lake 2 W be e founde C be youf founde 4 W Hand in margin pointing to this line.
 6-7 W do so C done so 8 C was be holden to 17 C forborne her in my 24 C oute of the town 25 therefore not in C 27 C and telle my frendys in Northumberland 33-4 The words in square brackets (the and to occur both in C and in W's second rendering of Balyne's speech. See next page, note to lines 5-6

hym, othir ellis to dye therefore. And iff hit may happe me to wynne hym, than woll kynge Arthure be my good frende.'

'Sir, [wher] shall I mete with you?' seyde his squyre.

'In kynge Arthurs courte,' seyde Balyne. So his squyre ⁵ and he departed at that tyme. Than kynge Arthure and all the courte made grete dole and had grete shame of the Lady of the Lake. Than the kynge buried hir rychely.

So at that tyme there was a knyght, the which was the ⁽⁴⁾ kynges son of Irelande, and hys name was Launceor, the ¹⁰ which was an orgulus knyght and accompted hymself one of the beste of the courte. And he had grete despite at Balyne for the enchevyng of the swerde, that ony sholde be accompted more hardy or more of prouesse, and he asked kynge Arthure licence to ryde afftir Balyne and to revenge ¹⁵ the despite that he had done. 'Do youre beste,' seyde Arthur. 'I am ryght wrothe with Balyne. I wolde he were quytte of the despite that he hath done unto me and my courte.' Than thys Launceor wente to his ostré to make hym redy. ²⁰

So in the meanewhyle com Merlyon unto the courte of kynge Arthure, and anone was tolde hym the adventure of the swerde and the deth of the Lady of the Lake. 'Now shall I sey you,' seyde Merlion; 'thys same damesell that here stondith, that brought the swerde unto youre courte, ²⁵ I shall telle you the cause of hir commynge. She ys the falsist damesell that lyveth—she shall nat sey nay! For she hath a brothir, a passyng good knyght of proues and a full trew man, and thys damesell loved anothir knyght that hylde her as paramoure. And thys good knyght, her ³⁰ brothir, mette with the knyght that helde hir to paramoure, and slew hym by force of hys hondis. And whan thys false damesell undirstoode this she wente to the lady Lyle of

1 C to dye S or dye

2-4 C my good and gracious lord where shall I

5-6 W seyde Balyne I woll hyghe me in all the haste that I may to mete with kynge Royns So his C said Balen so his W repeats a line from Balyne's previous speech (see p. 66, 33-34). The error is doubtless due to the recurrence of the words seyde Balyne in almost identical position.

7 C and had shame of the deth of the lady ¹⁵ W kynge kynge C Arthur yf he wold gyue hym leve to ryde

17 C wroth said† Balen I wold ²² C Arthur and there was told ²⁶ C she was the ²⁷⁻⁸ C lyueth say not so said they She hath a

Avylion and toke hir hys swerde and besought hir of helpe to be revenged on hir owne brothir.

- (5) 25^r 'And so thys lady Lyle of Avylion toke hir this swerde that she brought with hir, and tolde there sholde no man
 5 pulle hit oute of the sheethe but yf he be one of the beste knyghtes of thys realme, and he sholde be hardy and full of prouesse; and with that swerde he sholde sle hys brothir. Thys was the cause, damesell, that ye com into thys courte. I know hit as well as ye. God wolde ye had nat come here;
 10 but ye com never in felyship of worshipful folke for to do good, but allwayes grete harme. And that knyght that hath encheved the swerde shall be destroyed thorow the swerde; for the which wolle be grete damage, for there lyvith nat a knyght of more prouesse than he ys. And he shall do unto
 15 you, my lorde Arthure, grete honoure and kyndnesse; and hit ys grete pité he shall nat endure but a whyle, for of his strengthe and hardinesse I know hym nat lyvyng hys macche.'

So thys knyght of Irelande armed hym at all poyntes and
 20 dressed his shyld on hys sholdir and mownted uppon horsebacke and toke hys glayve in hys honde, and rode aftir a grete pace as muche as hys horse myght dryve. And within a litill space on a mowntayne he had a syght of Balyne, and with a lowde voice he cryde, 'Abyde, knyght!
 25 for ells ye shall abyde whethir ye wolle other no. And the shelde that ys tofore you shall nat helpe you,' seyde thys Iryshe knyght, 'therefore com I affter you.'

1 and toke hir hys swerde *not in C**. Whether these words occurred in *M* is at best doubtful, for they are clearly out of keeping with the story. *F* makes it plain that the damsel receives the sword from the Lady of Avalon; the words toke hir this swerde that she brought with hir in the next sentence must therefore be taken to mean 'gave her the sword that she (i.e. the damsel) had brought to Arthur's court'. Cf. *Huth Merlin*, f. 104a: et maintenant le chaint de l'espee que elle aporta en ceste court
 7 *C* see her broder *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 104b) would justify either reading: Et si n'averra de ceste espee mie seul mal a son frere, ains en mourront cil dui que je connois vraiment qui sont li millor chevalier dou roiaume 8-11 *C* the cause that the damoysele came in to this Courte I knowe it as wel as ye wolde god she had nat comen in to thys Courte but she came neuer in felauship of worship to do good 17 hym *not in C* 21 *C* toke his spere 22 *C* myght goo and 25 ells *not in C* *C* ye will or nyll and 26-7 *C* not helpe whan Balyne herd the noyse he touned his hors fyersly and saide faire knyghte what wille ye with me wille ye Iuste with me ye said the Irysshe *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 105a) lends no support to this reading: A ches paroles se regarde Balaain et connoist que joustier le

'Peradventure,' seyde Balyne, 'ye had bene bettir to have holde you at home. For many a man wenyth to put hys enemy to a rebuke, and ofte hit fallith on hymself. Oute of what courte be ye com fro?' seyde Balyn.

'I am com frome the courte of kynge Arthure,' seyde the knyght of Irelande, 'that am com hydir to revenge the despite ye dud thys day unto kynge Arthure and to his courte.'

'Well,' seyde Balyne, 'I se well I must have ado with you; that me forthynkith that I have greved kynge Arthure or any of hys courte. And youre quarell ys full symple,' seyde Balyne, 'unto me; for the lady that ys dede dud to me grete damage, and ellis I wolde have bene lothe as any knyght that lyvith for to sle a lady.'

'Make you redy,' seyde the knyght Launceor, 'and dresse you unto me, for that one shall abyde in the fylde.'

Than they fewtred their spearis in their restis and com togidirs as muche as their horsis my[g]ht dryve. And the Irysh knyght smote Balyn on the shylde that all wente to shyers of hys spere. And Balyne smote hym agayne thorow the shylde, and [the] hawbirk perysshed, and so bore hym thorow the body and over the horse crowper; and anone turned hys horse fersely and drew oute hys swerde, and wyst nat that he had slayne hym.

Than he saw hym lye as a dede corse, he loked aboute hym and was ware of a damesel that com rydyng full faste as the horse myght dryve, on a fayre palferey. And whan she aspyed that Launceor was slayne she made sorow oute of mesure and seyde, 'Al Balyne, two bodyes thou haste sla(in) one herte, and two hertes in one body, and two soules thou hast loste.' And therewith she toke the swerde frome hir love that lay dede, and felle to the grounde in a swowghe.

And whan she arose she made grete dole oute of mesure,

convient erramment, se li a dit si haut que chis le puet bien entendre: 'Chevaliers! Anchois que tu joustes a moi, di moi a cui tu iés.' 1 C it had ben better 4 C

be ye sent fro 10 C forthynketh for to greue kyng arthur† 17 C they

toke their speres in their restis not in C W Hand in margin opposite this line.

20-2 C Balyn hyt hym thorough the shield and the hauberk perysshed & so percyd

thurgh his body and the hors crope W (sidenote): How Balyn slew Launceor

24-5 C slayn hym and thenne he sawe hym lye as a dede corps CAPITULUM VI

Thenne he 26-7 C that came ryde ful fast as the hors myghte ryde on a

30 W slayne one C slayne and one (see note) 32 C in a swowne

which sorow greved Balyn passyngly sore. And he wente unto hir for to have tane the swerde oute of hir honde; but she helde hit so faste he myght nat take hit oute of hir honde but yf he sholde have hurte hir. And suddeynly
 5 she sette the pomell to the grounde, and rove hirselff thorowoute the body.

Whan Balyne aspyed hir dedis he was passynge hevy in his herte and ashamed that so fayre a damesell had destroyed himselff for the love of hys dethe. 'Alas!' seyde Balyn, 'me
 10 repentis sore the dethe of thys knyght for the love of thys damesel, for there was muche trw love betwyxte hem.' And so for sorow he myght no lenger beholde them, but turned hys horse and loked towarde a fayre foreste.

And than was he ware by hys armys that there com rydyng
 15 hys brothir Balan. And whan they were mette they put of hyr helmys and kyssed togydirs and wepte for joy and pité. Than Balan seyde, 'Brothir, I litill wende to have mette with you at thys suddayne adventure, but I am ryght glad of youre delyveraunce of youre dolerous presonment:
 20 for a man tolde me in the Castell of Four Stonys that ye were delyverde, and that man had seyne you in the courte of kynge Arthure. And therefore I com hydir into thys contrey, for here I supposed to fynde you.'

And anone Balyne tolde hys brothir of hys adventure of
 25 the swerde and the deth of the Lady of the Laake, and how kynge Arthure was displeased with hym.
 26^r 'Wherefore he sente thys knyght afftir me that lyethe here dede. And the dethe of thys damesell grevith me sore.'

30 'So doth hit me,' seyde Balan. 'But ye must take the adventure that God woll ordayne you.'

'Truly,' seyde Balyne, 'I am ryght hevy that my lorde Arthure ys displeased with me, for he ys the moste worshypfullist kynge that regnith now in erthe; and hys love
 35 I woll gete othir ellis I woll putte my lyff in adventure. For kynge Ryons lyeth at the sege of the Castell Terrable,

12 *C* behold hym† but 13 *C* a grete forest *No adjective in F.* 14-15 *C* and ther he was ware by the armes of his broder Balan 17 Brothir *not in C* 19 *C* delyveraunce and oft *F (Huth Merlin, f. 105d): par quel aventure estes vous delivrés de la dolereuse prison ou vous estiés* 23-4 *C* fynde you anon the knyzt balyn 33-4 *C* worshipful knyght that 36 *C* lyeth at a syege atte castel Tarabil

and thydir woll we draw in all goodly haste to preve oure worship and prouesse uppon hym.'

'I woll well,' seyde Balan, 'that ye so do; and I woll ryde with you and put my body in adventure with you, as a brothir ought to do.'

'Now go we hense,' seyde Balyne, 'and well we beth⁵ mette.'

The meanewhyle as they talked there com a dwarff frome the cité of Camelot on horsebacke as much as he myght, and founde the dede bodyes; wherefore he made grete dole¹⁰ and pulled hys heyre for sorowe and seyde,

'Which of two knyghtes have done this dede?'

'Whereby askist thou?' seyde Balan.

'For I wolde wete,' seyde the dwarff.

'Hit was I,' seyde Balyn, 'that slew this knyght in my¹⁵ defendaunte; for hyder he com to chase me, and othir I muste sle hym other he me. And this damesell slew herself for his love, which repentith me. And for hir sake I shall owghe all women the bettir wyll and servyse all the dayes of my lyff.'

'Alas!' seyde the dwarff, 'thou hast done grete damage unto thyselff. For thys knyght that ys here dede was one of the moste valyauntis men that lyved. And truste well, Balyne, the kynne of thys knyght woll chase you thorow the worlde tylle they have slayne you.'

'As for that,' seyde Balyne, 'the I fere nat gretely; but I am ryght hevvy that I sholde displease my lorde, kynge Arthure, for the deth of thys knyght.'

So as they talked togydirs there com a kynge of Cornuwayle rydyng, which hyght kyng Marke. And whan he³⁰ saw thes two bodyes dede, and undirstood howe they were dede, 'by' the two knyghtes aboven-seyde, 'thenne' made

1 goodly *not in C* 3-5 *C* that we do & we wil helpe eche other as bretheren
 ougt to do *CA VII* 6-7 *C* wel be we met 12 *C* which of you knyghtes
 13-14 *C* askest thou it said balan . . . wete it said the dwarfe 19-21 *C* better loue
 Allas 26 the *not in C* 27 *C* that I haue displeasyd 32—p. 72, 1
W dede the ii knyghtes aboven seyde made to the kynge *C** dede by the ii knyghtes
 aboue saide thenne maade the kynge *C* is probably nearer the original; cf. *F* (*Huth*
Merlin, f. 106c): quant il fu venus la ou le dui cors gisoient a la terre et il en sot
 la verité ensi comme li dui frere li conterent, il dist qu'il n'avoit onques mais oi
 parler de damoisele qui si loiaument amast. *W* must have overlooked the word by
 and added to for the sense.

the kynge grete sorow for the trew love that was betwyxte them, and seyde, 'I woll nat departe tyll I have on thys erth made a towmbe.' And there he pyght his pavylyons and sought all the contrey to fynde a towmbe, and in a chyrch
 5 they founde one was fayre and ryche. And than the kyng
 26^v lette putte h[e]m bothe in the erthe, and leyde the tombe uppon them, and wrote the namys of hem bothe on the tombe, how 'here lyeth Launceor, the kyngis son of Irelande, that at hys owne rekeyste was slayne by the hondis of
 10 Balyne,' and how 'this lady Columbe and peramour to hym slew hirself with hys swerde for dole and sorow.'

(8) The meanewhyle as thys was adoyng, in com Merlion to kynge Marke and saw all thys doynge. 'Here shall be,' seyde Merlion, 'in this same place the grettist bateyle
 15 betwyxte two [knyghtes] that ever was or ever shall be, and the trewyst lovers; and yette none of hem shall slee other.' And there Merlion wrote hir namys uppon the tombe with lettirs of golde, that shall feyght in that place: which namys was Launcelot du Lake and Trystrams.

20 'Thou [art] a mervelous man,' seyde kynge Marke unto Merlion, 'that spekist of such mervayles. Thou arte a boysteous man and an unlyckly, to telle of suche dedis. What ys thy name?' seyde kynge Marke.

'At thys tyme,' seyde Merlion, 'I woll nat telle you.
 25 But at that tyme sir Trystrams ys takyn with his soveraigne lady, than shall ye here and know my name; and at that tyme ye shall [here] tydynges that shall nat please you.'

'A, Balyne!' seyde Merlion, 'thou haste done thyselff grete hurte that thou saved nat thys lady that slew herself;
 30 for thou myghtyst have saved hir and thou haddist wold.'

'By the fayth of my body,' seyde Balyne, 'I myght nat save hir, for she slewe herselff suddeynly.'

4 C soughte thurgh alle the 6-15 W (sidenote): how the lady Columbe slew hirselfe for the deth of Launceor. 6 W hom bothe C hem bothe C & put the tombe 10-11 C how his lady colombe and peramour slew her self with her lous sward for 13-14 C mark seyng alle his doynge said Here shalle be in 15 W two men (see note) C that was 18 C that shold fyghte 20 W Thou a C thow art a 24 you not in C 27 W shall othir tydynges C* shal here tydynges F (Huith Merlin, f. 107a): dont te dira on teuls nouvelles de moi qui te desclairont 27-8 C please yow Thenne said merlyn to balyn thou 29 C hurt by cause that 29-30 C her self that myght have saued her & thow woldest

'Me repentis hit,' seyde Merlion; 'because of the dethe of that lady thou shalt stryke a stroke moste dolerous that ever man stroke, excepte the stroke of oure Lorde Jesu Cryste. For thou shalt hurte the trewyst knyght and the man of moste worship that now lyvith; and thorow that stroke, three kyngdomys shall be brought into grete poverté, miseri and wrecchednesse twelve yere. And the knyght shall nat be hole of that wounde many yers.' Than Merlion toke hys leve.

'Nay,' seyde Balyn, 'nat so; for and I wyste thou seyde soth, I wolde do so perleous a dede that I wolde sle myself to make the a lyer.'

Therewith Merlion vanysshed away suddeynly, and than Balyn and his brother toke their leve of kynge Marke.

'But first,' seyde the kynge, 'telle me youre name.'

'Sir,' seyde Balan, 'ye may se he beryth two swerdis, and thereby ye may calle hym the Knyght with the Two Swerdis.'

And so departed kynge Marke unto Camelot to kynge Arthure.

And Balyne toke the way to kynge Royns, and as they rode togydir they mette with Merlion disgyssed so that they knew hym nought.

'But whotherward ryde ye?' seyde Merlion.

'We had litill ado to telle you,' seyde thes two knyghtes.

'But what ys thy name?' seyde Balyn.

'At thys tyme,' seyde Merlion, 'I woll nat telle.'

'Hit ys an evyll sygne,' seyde the knyghtes, 'that thou arte a trew man, that thou wolt nat telle thy name.'

'As for that,' seyde Merlion, 'be as hit be may. But I can telle you wherefore ye ryde thys way: for to mete with kynge Royns. But hit woll nat avayle you withoute ye have my counceyle.'

'A,' seyde Balyn, 'ye ar Merlion. We woll be ruled by youre counceyle.'

'Com on,' seyde Merlion, 'and ye shall have grete

3-4 Jesu Cryste *not in C* 6 C be in grete 9-11 C leue of balyn & balen
said yf I wist it were soth that ye say I shold do suche a peryllous dede 22-3 C
desgyssed but they 25-6 C we haue lytel to do saide the ij knyghtes to telle
the but 27 C telle it the 28 C it is euyl sene

worship. And loke that ye do knyghtly, for ye shall have nede.'

'As for that,' seyde Balyne, 'dred you nat, for we woll do what we may.'

- (9) 5 Than there lodged Merlion and thes two knyghtes in a woode amonge the levis besydes the hyghway, and toke of the brydyls of their horsis and putte hem to grasse, and leyde hem downe to reste tyll hit was nyghe mydnyght. Than Merlion bade hem ryse and make hem redy: 'for here
10 commyth the kynge nyghehonde, that was stoolyn away frome his oste with a three score horsis of hys beste knyghtes, and twenty of them rode tofore the lorde to warne the Lady de Vaunce that the kynge was commynge.' For that nyght kynge Royns sholde have lyen with hir.

- 15 'Which ys the kynge?' seyde Balyne.

'Abyde,' seyde Merlion, 'for here in a strete [weye] ye shall mete with hym.' And therewith he shewed Balyne and hys brothir the kynge.

- And anone they mette with hym, and smote hym downe
20 and wounded hym freyshly, and layde hym to the growunde. And there they slewe on the ryght honde and on the lyfte honde mo than fourty of hys men; and the remanaunte fledde. Than wente they agayne unto kynge Royns and wolde have slayne hym, had he nat yelded hym unto hir
25 grace. Than seyde he thus:

'Knyghtes full of prouesse, sle me nat! For be my lyff ye may wyne, and by my dethe litill.'

'Ye say sothe,' seyde the knyghtes, and so leyde hym on an horse littur.

- 30 So with that Merlion vanysshed, and com to kynge Arthure aforehonde and tolde hym how hys moste enemy was takyn and discomfite.

'By whom?' seyde kynge Arthure.

1-2 *C* haue grete nede 5 *C* Thenne Merlyn lodged them in a 9-10 *C*† for the the kynge was nygh them that was *Direct speech in F (Huth Merlin, f. 108c-d)*.
12 the lord *not in C* 13 *C* de Vance *F* (*loc. cit.*) des Vaus 16 *C* in a streyte wey *F (Huth Merlin, f. 109c)*: et il venoient petit et petit, car li chemins par les tertres estoit estrois pour aler a la montaigne 18-19 *C* his broder where he rode anon balyne & his broder mette with the kyng & smote
20 *C* hym fyersly and 21-2 *C* lyfte hond and slewe moo 27-8 *C* dethe ye shalle wyne noo thinge Thenne sayd these two knyghtes ye say sothe & trouth and so leyde 30 *C* Merlyn was vanysshed

'By two knyghtes,' seyde Merlion, 'that wolde fayne have youre lordship. And to-morrow ye shall know what knyghtis they ar.' 27

So anone aftir com the Knyght with the Two Swerdis and hys brothir, and brought with them kyng Royns of Northe Waalis, and there delyverde hym to the porters, and charged hem with hym. And so they two returned agen in the dawning of the day.

Than kyng Arthure com to kyng Royns and seyde, 'Sir kyng, ye ar wellcom. By what adventure com ye hydir?' 10

'Sir,' seyde kyng Royns, 'I com hyder by an harde adventure.'

'Who wanne you?' seyde kyng Arthure.

'Sir,' seyde he, 'the Knyght with the Two Swerdis and hys brothir, which ar two mervayles knyghtes of prouesse.' 15

'I know hem nat,' seyde Arthure, 'but much am I beholdynge unto them.'

'A, sir,' seyde Merlion, 'I shall telle you. Hit ys Balyn that encheved the swerde and his brothir Balan, a good knyght: there lywith nat a bettir of proues, nother of worthy-nesse. And hit shall be the grettist dole of hym that ever y knew of knyght; for he shall nat longe endure.' 20

'Alas,' seyde kyng Arthure, 'that ys grete pité; for I am muche beholdynge unto hym, and I have evill deserved hit agayne for hys kyndnesse.' 25

'Nay, nay,' sede Merlion, 'he shall do much more for you, and that shall ye know in haste. But, sir, ar ye purveyde?' seyde Merlion. '[For to-morn] the oste of kyng Nero, kyng Royns brothir, woll sette on you or none with a grete oste. And therefore make you redy, for I woll departe frome you.' 30

Than kyng Arthure made hys oste redy in ten batayles; and Nero was redy in the fylde afore the Castell Terrable with a grete oste. And he had ten batayles with many peple than kyng Arthure had. Than Nero had the vawarde with the moste party of the peple. And Merlion com 35

1-2 C wold please your lordship 5 C and balan his broder
kyng the knyght 25 C deserued hit vnto hym for his
29 W tomorne for C* for to morne 37 C of his peple

14-15 C said the
27 C nay said

to kyng Lotte of the Ile of Orkeney, and helde hym with a tale of the prophecy tylle Nero and his peple were destroyed. And there sir Kay the Senesciall dud passyngely well, that dayes of hys lyff the worship wente never frome
 5 hym, and sir Hervis de Revel that dud merveyulous dedys of armys that day with Arthur. And kyng Arthure slew that day twenty knyghtes and maymed fourty.

So at that tyme com in the Knyght with the Two Swerdis and his brothir, but they dud so mervaylously that
 10 the kyng and all the knyghtes mervayled of them. And all they that behelde them seyde they were sente frome
 28^r hevyn as angels other devilles frome helle. And kyng Arthure seyde hymself they were the doughtyeste knyghtes that ever he sawe, for they gaff such strokes that all men had
 15 wondir of hem.

So in the meanewhyle com one to kyng Lotte and tolde hym whyle he tarried there how Nero was destroyed and slayne with all his oste. 'Alas,' seyde kyng Lotte, 'I am
 20 ashamed; for in my defeaute there ys [many a worshipful man slayne; for and we had ben togyders there hadde ben] none oste undir hevyn were able to have macched us. But thys faytoure with hys prophecy hath mocked me.' All that dud Merlion, for he knew well that 'and' kyng Lotte had bene with hys body at the first batayle, kyng Arthure had
 25 be slayne and all hys peple distressed. And well Merlion knew that one of the kynges sholde be dede that day; and lothe was Merlion that ony of them bothe sholde be slayne, but of the tweyne he had levir kyng Lotte of Orkeney had be slayne than Arthure.

30 'What ys beste to do?' seyde kyng Lotte. 'Whether ys

2 C a tale of prophceye 4 W that dayes of hys lyff that the worship C* that the dayes of his lyf the worship 5 that *not in C* 6 of armys that day *not in C* 9 C his broder Balan But they two did 13 C the best knyghtes 18 C al his peple Allas 19-21 C for by my defeaute ther is many a worshipful man slayne for and we had ben to gyders there hadde ben none hooste vnder the heven that had ben abel for to haue matched with vs *After the words there ys W omits a whole line (approximately 70 letters). These words most probably occurred in W's original at the end of a line, exactly as they do in W itself.* 23 W that kyng C* that and kyng F (Huth Merlin, f. 117a): 'Merlins m'a mort. Se je eusse dés hui matin chevauchié a esfors, je eusse le roi desconfit.' 24 C body there at 25 C peple destroyed 28-9 of Orkeney *not in C* 30 C Now what C kyng Lot of Orkeney

me bettir to trete with kynge Arthure othir to fyght? For the gretter party of oure people ar slayne and distressed.'

'Sir,' seyde a knyght, 'sette ye on Arthure, for they ar wery and forfoughtyn, and we be freyssh.'

'As for me,' seyde kynge Lott, 'I wolde that every knyght 5 wolde do hys parte as I wolde do myne.'

Than they avaunced baners and smote togydirs and brused hir sperys. And Arthurs knyghtes with the helpe of the Knyght with Two Swerdys and hys brothir Balan put kynge Lotte and hys oste to the warre. But allwayes 10 kynge Lotte hylde hym ever in the fore-fronte and dud merveyulous dedis of armys; for all his oste was borne up by hys hondys, for he abode all knyghtes. Alas, he myght nat endure, the whych was grete pité! So worthy a knyght as he was one, that he sholde be overmacched, that of late 15 tyme before he had bene a knyght of kynge Arthurs, and wedded the syster of hym. And for because that kynge Arthure lay by hys wyff and gate on her sir Mordred, therefore kynge Lott helde ever agaynste Arthure.

So there was a knyght that was called the Knyght with 20 the Strange Best[e], and at that tyme hys ryght name was called Pellynore, which was a good man off prouesse as few in tho dayes lyvyng. And he strake a myghty stroke at kynge Lott as he fought with hys enemyes, and he fayled of hys stroke and smote the horse necke, that he foundred 25 to the erthe with kyng Lott. And therewith anone kynge Pellinor smote hym a grete stroke thorow the helme and hede unto the browis. 28v

Than all the oste of Orkeney fledde for the deth of kynge Lotte, and there they were takyn and slayne, all the oste. 30 But kynge Pellynore bare the wyte of the dethe of kynge Lott, wherefore sir Gawayne revenged the deth of hys fadir

2 C slayne and destroyed 7-8 C to gyders and al to sheuered their speres
 11 ever *not in C* C foremost front 14-15 C pite that so worthy a knyght
 as he was one shold be 17-18 C the sister of kyng arthur & for kyng
 Arthur lay by kyng lots wyf the whiche was arthurs syster & gat 19 ever
not in C 21 W best(es) C* beeste. F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 118d): li chevaliers a la
 diverse beste 22-3 as few in tho dayes lyvyng *not in C* 23 C he smote a
 myghty 24 C with all his enemyes 25-6 C that he fylle to the grounde
 26 W *Hand in margin pointing to this line.* 30-1 C and there were slayn
 many moders sones But 31-2 *After kynge Lott W repeats the previous line:*
 and there were takyn and slayne all the hole oste

the ten yere aftir he was made knyght, and slew kynge Pellynor hys owne hondis. Also there was slayne at that batayle twelve kynges on the syde of kynge Lott with Nero, and were buryed in the chirch of Seynte Stevins in Camelot.

5 And the remanent of knyghtes and other were buryed in a grete roche.

- (11) So at the enterement com kyng Lottis wyff, Morgause, with hir four sonnes, Gawayne, Aggravayne, Gaheris, and Gareth. Also there com thydir kyng Uryens, sir Uwaynes
10 fadir, and Morgan le Fay, his wyff, that was kynge Arthurs syster. All thes com to the enterement. But of all the twelve kyngis kynge Arthure lette make the tombe of kynge Lotte passynge rychely, and made hys tombe by hymselff.

And than Arthure lette make twelve images of laton
15 and cooper, and overgylte with golde in the sygne of the twelve kynges; and eche one of hem helde a tapir of waxe in hir honde that brente nyght and day. And kynge Arthure was made in the sygne of a fygure stondynge aboven them with a swerde drawyn in hys honde, and all the twelve
20 fygures had countenaunce lyke unto men that were overcom. All thys made Merlion by hys subtile craufte.

And there he tolde the kynge how that whan he was dede thes tapers sholde brenne no lenger, 'aftir the adventures of the Sankgreall that shall com amonge you and be encheved.'

25 Also he tolde kynge Arthure how Balyn, the worshipfull knyght, shall gyff the dolerouse stroke, whereof shall falle grete vengeance.

'A, where ys Balyne, Balan, and Pellinore?'

'As for kynge Pellinore,' seyde Merlion, 'he woll mete
30 with you soone. And as for Balyne, he woll nat be longe frome you. But the other brothir woll departe: ye shall se hym no more.'

'Be my fayth,' seyde Arthur, 'they ar two manly knyghtes, and namely that Balyne passith of proues off ony knyght

2 C Pellinore with his 4 C and all were 9-10 C Ewayns fader 13 C
made his tombe by his owne Not in F. 15 C ouer gylt hit with 13-21 W
(sidenote): Here ys the dethe of kynge Lot and of the xii kyngis 15-16 C of xii
kynges 17 in hir honde not in C† F (Huth *Merlin*, f. 119b): chascuns
tenoit en sa main un candeler 22-4 C the kyng whā I am dede these tapers
shalle brenne no lenger and soone after the adventures of the Sangrayll shall
28-9 C Pellinore saide kynge Arthur as for Pellinore 33-4 C two merueyllous
knyghtes and namely Balyn

that ever y founde, for much am I beholdynge unto hym.
Wolde God he wolde abyde with me!

'Sir,' seyde Merlion, 'loke ye kepe well the scawberd of
Excaleber, for ye shall lose no bloode whyle ye have the
scawberde uppon you, thoughe ye have as many woundis 5 29^r
uppon you as ye may have.' (So aftir for grete truste Arthure
betoke the scawberde unto Morgan le Fay, hys sister. And
she loved another knyght bettir than hir husbände, kynge
Uriens, othir Arthure. And she wolde have had Arthure
hir brother slayne, and therefore she lete make anothir 10
scawberd for Excaliber 'lyke it by enchauntement, and gaf
the scawberd Excaliber to her lover'. And the knyghtes
name was called Accolon, that aftir had nere slayne kynge
Arthure.)

But aftir thys Merlion tolde unto kynge Arthure of the 15
prophecy that there sholde be a grete batayle besydes
Salysbiry, and Mordred hys owne sonne sholde be agaynste
hym. Also he tolde hym that Bagdemagus was his cosyne
germayne, and unto kynge Uryens.

So within a day or two kynge Arthure was somewhat 20 (12)
syke, and he lette pycch hys pavilion in a medow, and there
he leyde hym downe on a paylet to slepe; but he myght have
no reste. Ryght so he herde a grete noyse of an horse, and
therewith the kynge loked oute at the porche dore of the
pavilion and saw a knyght commynge evyn by hym makynge 25
grete dole.

'Abyde, fayre sir,' seyde Arthure, 'and telle me wherefore
thou makyst this sorow.'

'Ye may litill amende me,' seyde the knyght, and so
passed forth to the Castell of Meliot. 30

And anone aftir that com Balyne. And whan he saw
kyng Arthur he alyght of hys horse and com to the kynge
one foote and salewed hym. 'Be my hede,' seyde Arthure,
'ye be wellcom. Sir, ryght now com rydynge thys way a
knyght makynge grete morne, and for what cause I can 35

11-12 *W* scawberd for Excaliber And the *C** scauberd lyke it by enchaunte-
ment and gaf the scauberd Excalibur to her loue and the knyghtes *F* (*Huth*
Merlin, f. 121b): Lors bailla a son ami meismes tout en cel jour l'autre fuerre
18 *C* Basdemagus 18-19 *C* cosyn and germayn vnto kynge Vryence 24 dore
not in C 31 *C* ther cam 35 *C* grete moorne *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 124b):
grant duel

nat telle. Wherefore I wolde desire of you, of your curtesy and of your jantilnesse, to fecche agayne that knyght othir by force othir by his good wyll.

'I shall do more for youre lordeship than that,' seyde
5 Balyne, 'othir ellis I woll greve hym.'

So Balyn rode more than a pace and founde the knyght with a damesell undir a foreyste and seyde, 'Sir knyght, ye muste com with me unto kynge Arthure for to telle hym of youre sorow.'

10 'That woll I nat,' seyde the knyght, 'for hit woll harme me gretely and do you none avayle.'

'Sir,' seyde Balyne, 'I pray you make you redy, for ye muste go with me othir ellis I muste fyght with you and brynge you by for[c]e. And that were me lothe to do.'

15 'Woll ye be my warraunte,' seyde the knyght, 'and I go with you.'

'Yee,' seyde Balyne, 'othir ellis, by the fayth of my body,
29^v I woll dye therefore.'

And so he made hym redy to go with Balyne and leffte
20 the damesell styll.

And as they were evyn before Arthurs pavilion, there com one invisible and smote the knyght that wente with Balyn thorowoute the body with a spere.

'Alas!' seyde the knyght, 'I am slayne undir youre con-
25 duyte with a knyght called 'Garlon'. Therefore take my horse that is bettir than youre, and ryde to the damesell and folow the queste that I was in as she woll lede you, and revenge my deth whan ye may.'

'That shall I do,' seyde Balyn, 'and that I make a vow
30 to God and knyghthode.'

And so he departed frome kynge Arthure with grete sorow.

5 othir ellis I woll greve hym *not in C* 7 *C* damoyssel in a forest† *F*
(*Huth Merlin*, f. 124c): au piet d'une montaigne 8 *W* for for to telle 10-11
C wyll scathe me gretely and now do 14 *W* by fore *C* by force *F*
(*Huth Merlin*, f. 124d): 'Se vous ne retornés, fait li autres, vous me ferez faire
une vilonnie, car je m'en prendrai a vous a bataille pleniére' 17 by the fayth
of my body *not in C*† 25 *W* Garlonde *C** Garlon *F* Garlan (*also* Gallan)
26—p. 81, 4 *W* (*sidenote*): How Garlonde that went invisyle slew Harlewe le Barbens
under the conduyt of Balyn 29 *Misprint in S* (make vow). 30 God and *not in C*
31 *C* departed from thys knyght† *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 125b): Puis dist au roi:
'Sire, je m'en vois de chi, si vous commanc a Dieu'

So kynge Arthure lette bury this knyght rychely, and made mencion [on] his tombe how here was slayne Berbeus and by whom the trechory was done of the knyght 'Garlon'. But ever the damesell bare the truncheon of the spere with hir that sir Harleus le Berbeus was slayne withall.

So Balyne and the damesell rode into the foreyste and there mette with a knyght that had bene an hontynge. And that knyght asked Balyn for what cause he made so grete sorow.

'Me lyste nat to telle,' seyde Balyne.

'Now,' seyde the knyght, 'and I were armed as ye be, I wolde fyght with you but iff ye tolde me.'

'That sholde litell nede,' seyde Balyne, 'I am nat aferde to telle you,' and so tolde hym all the case how hit was.

'A,' seyde the knyght, 'ys thys all? Here I ensure you by the feyth of my body never to departe frome you whyle my lyff lastith.'

And so they wente to their ostré and armed hem and so rode forthe with Balyne.

And as they com by an ermytage evyn by a chy[r]cheyerde, there com 'Garlon' invisible and smote this knyght, Peryne de Mounte Belyarde, thorowoute the body with a glayve.

'Alas,' seyde the knyght, 'I am slayne by thys traytoure knyght that rydith invisible.'

'Alas,' seyde Balyne, 'thys ys nat the firste despite that he hath done me.'

And there the ermyte and Balyne buried the knyght undir a ryche stone and a tombe royall. And on the morne they founde letters of golde wretyn how that sir Gawayne shall revenge his fadirs deth 'kynge Lot' on kynge Pellynore.

And anone aftir this Balyne and the damesell rode forth tylle they com to a castell. And anone Balyne alyghte and wente in. And as sone as 'Balyne came' with in the castels

2 *W* made mencion his tombe *C** made a mensyon on his tombe *C* Herleus le berbeus 3 of *not in C* 3 See note to p. 80, line 25. 5 le Berbeus *not in C* 6 *C* in to a forest 9 *C* to telle yow saide Balyn 11 but iff ye tolde me *not in C* 19-29 *W* (*sidenote*): Here Garlonde invisible slew Peryne de Mounte Beliard under the conduyght of Balyn 20 See note to p. 80, line 25. 21 *C* with a spere† *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 129a): ferus d'une glaive par mi le cors 20-22 *W* *Hand in margin pointing to these lines.* 29 *C** his faders deth kynge Lot on the kynge Pellynore *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 129d): En ceste chimentiere vengera Gavains le roi Loth son pere 32—p. 82, 1 *W* And as sone as they (?) were with (?) the portecolys were lette downe *C** and anone as balyn came within the

yate¹ the portecolys were lette downe at his backe, and there
 30^r felle many men aboute the damesell and wolde have slayne
 hir. Whan Balyne saw that, he was sore greved for he myght
 nat helpe her. But than he wente up into a towre and
 5 lepte over the wallis into the dyche and hurte nat hymselff.
 And anone he pulled oute his swerde and wolde have
 foughtyn with them. And they all seyde nay, they wolde
 nat fyght with hym, for they dud nothyng but the olde
 custom of thys castell, and tolde hym that hir lady was
 10 syke and had leyne many yeres, and she myght nat be
 hole but yf she had bloode in a sylver dysshe full, of a
 clene mayde and a kynges doughter. 'And therefore the
 custom of thys castell ys that there shall no damesell passe
 thys way but she shall blede of hir bloode a sylver dysshe-
 15 full.'

'Well,' seyde Balyne, 'she shall blede as much as she may
 blede, but I woll nat lose the lyff of hir whyle my lyff
 lastith.' And so Balyn made hir to bleede by hir good wyll,
 but hir bloode holpe nat the lady. And so she and he rested
 20 there all that nyght and had good chere, and in the mornynge
 they passed on their wayes. And as hit tellith aftir in the
 SANKGREALL that sir Percivall his syster holpe that lady with
 hir blood, whereof she was dede.

(14) Than they rode three or four dayes and nevir mette with
 25 adventure. And so by fortune they were lodged with a
 jantilman. And as they sate at souper Balyn herde one
 complayne greuously by hym in a chambir.

'What ys thys noyse?' seyde Balyn.

'For sothe,' seyde his oste, 'I woll telle you. I was but
 30 late at a justynge and there I justed with a knyght that ys
 brothir unto kynge Pellam, and twyse I smote hym downe.
 And than he promysed to quyte me on my beste frende.
 And so he wounded thus my son that can nat be hole tylle

castels yate the portecolys fyller downe *F (Huth Merlin, f. 130c):* Et li chevalliers
 aloit devant et la damoisele après, loing l'un de l'autre. Et si tost comme il se fu
 mis el chastiel cil d'amont laissent avaler une porte coulische 4 *C* helpe the
 damoyssel *C* in to the toure 5 *C* hurte hym not 11-12 *C* had a dysshe
 of syluer ful of blood of a clene 13 that *not in C* 20 *C* had there ryght
 good 25 *C* and by happe 26-7 *C* a gentyll man that was a ryche man
 and well at ease And as they sat at her souper balyn herd ouer complayne
 greuously by him in a chayer† *F (Huth Merlin, f. 133b):* . . . en une des
 chambres de laiens 33 thus *not in C*

I have of that knyghtes bloode. And he rydith all invisibyle,
but I know nat hys name.'

'A,' seyde Balyne, 'I know that knyghtes name, which
ys 'Garlon', and he hath slayne two knyghtes of myne in
the same maner. Therefore I had levir mete with that
knyght than all the golde in thys realme, for the despyte
he hath done me.'

'Well,' seyde hys oste, 'I shall telle you how. Kynge
Pellam off Lystenoyse hath made do cry in all the contrey
a grete feste that shall be within thes twenty dayes, and no
knyght may com there but he brynge hys wyff with hym
othir hys paramoure. And that your enemy and myne ye
shall se that day.'

'Than I promyse you,' seyde Balyn, 'parte of his bloode
to hele youre sonne withall.'

'Than we woll be forewarde to-morne,' seyde he.

So on the morne they rode all three towarde kynge Pellam,
and they had fyftene dayes journey or they com thydir. And
that same day began the grete feste. And so they alyght
and stabled their horsis and wente into the castell, but
Balynes oste myght 'not' be lette in because he had no lady.
But Balyne was well receyved and brought unto a chambir
and unarmed hym. And there was brought hym robis to
his plesure, and wolde have had Balyn leve his swerde be-
hynde hym. 'Nay,' seyde Balyne, 'that woll I nat, for hit
ys the custom of my contrey a knyght allweyes to kepe hys
wepyn with hym. Other ells,' seyde he, 'I woll departe as
I 'cl'am.' Than they gaff hym leve with his swerde, and
so he wente into the castell and was amonge knyghtes of
worship and hys lady afore hym.

So affir this Balyne asked a knyght and seyde, 'Ys there
nat a knyght in thys courte which his name ys 'Garlon'?'

1 C alwey Inuysible 3-4 C knowe that knyght his name is Garlon he hath
F Garlan 8 how not in C 9 C lystyneyse C this countrey 11 C but yf he
12 C & that knyghte youre enemy 14 C I behote yow 16 C sayd his oost
21 W myght be C* myght not be F (*Huth Mertin*, f. 134c): li ost remest defors
pour chou que il n'avoit avoec lui demoisele nule 21-2 C lady thenne Balyn
25 C that doo I not 27 C with hym and that customme wyll I kepe or els I wyll
27-8 W as I am C as I cam F (*loc. cit.*): dist que . . . se il ne voloient souffrir a faire
la coustume de son pais, il s'en iroit avant la dont il estoit venus 28 C leve to
were his swerd 29 C was sette amonge 30-1 C hym soone balyn 32-
p. 84, 1 C Garlon yonder he goth sayd a knyght he with the W Garlonde F Garlan

'Yes, sir, yondir he goth, the knyght with the blacke face, for he ys the mervaylyste knyght that ys now lyvyng. And he destroyeth many good knyghtes, for he goth invisible.'

'Well,' seyde Balyn, 'ys that he?' Than Balyn avised
 5 hym longe, and thought: 'If I sle hym here, I shall nat ascape. And if I leve hym now, peraventure I shall never mete with hym agayne at such a stevyn, and muche harme he wold do and he lyve.'

And therewith thys 'Garlon' aspyed that Balyn vysaged
 10 hym, so he com and slapped hym on the face with the backe of hys honde and seyde, 'Knyght, why beholdist thou me so? For shame, ete thy mete and do that thou com fore.'

'Thou seyst soth,' seyde Balyne, 'thys ys nat the firste
 15 spite that thou haste done me. And therefore I wold do that I com fore.' And rose hym up fersely and clave his hede to the sholdirs.

'Now geff me 'the' troncheon,' seyde Balyn 'to his lady', 'that he slew youre knyght with.' And anone she
 20 gaff hit hym, for allwey she bare the truncheoun with hir. And therewith Balan smote hym thorow the body and seyde
 31^r opynly, 'With that troncheon thou slewyste a good knyght, and now hit stykith in thy body.'

Than Balyn called unto hys oste and seyde, 'Now may
 (15) 25 we fecche blood inoughe to hele youre son withall.' So anone all the knyghtes rose frome the table for to sette on Balyne. And kynge Pellam hymself arose up fersely and seyde, 'Knyght, why hast thou slayne my brothir? Thou shalt dey therefore or thou departe.'

30 'Well,' seyde Balyn, 'do hit youreself.'

'Yes,' seyde kyng Pellam, 'there shall no man have ado with the but I myselff, for the love of my brothir.'

2-3 *C* lyuyng for he 4 *C A* wel 5 and thought *not in C†* *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 135a): Lors commenche li chevaliers a deus espees a penser, et quant il a grant pieche pensé etc. 9 *W* Garlonde *C* Garlon *F* Garlan 9-10 *C* that this Balen behelde hym and thenne he came and smote Balyn on the face
 12 *C* therfor ete 11-18 *W* (*sidenote*): How Balyn slew Garlon the knyght that wente invisible 18-19 *W* now geff me youre troncheon seyde Balyn that he slew youre knyght with *C** gyue me the truncheon sayd Balyn to his lady where with he slewe your knyght *F* (*MS. cit.*, f. 135c): Lors redist a la damoisele: 'Damoisele, bailliés moi le tronchon de quoi li chevaliers fu ferus.' 24-5 *C* vnto hym his hoost sayenge now may ye fetch 28 why *not in C†*

Than kynge Pellam 'caught in his hand' a grymme wepyn and smote egirly at Balyn, but he put hys swerde betwyxte hys hede and the stroke, and therewith hys swerde braste in sundir. And whan Balyne was wepynles he ran into a chambir for to seke a wepyn [and] fro chambir to chambir, 5 and no wepyn coude he fynde. And allwayes kyng Pellam folowed afftir hym. And at the last he enterde into a chambir (whyche) was mervaylously dyght and ryche, and abedde arayed with cloth of golde, the rychiste that myght be, and one lyyng therein, and thereby stooode a table of clene golde. 10 And uppon the table stooode a mervaylous spere strangely wrought.

So whan Balyn saw the spere he gate hit in hys honde and turned to kynge Pellam and felde hym and smote hym passyngly sore with that spere, that kynge Pellam [felle] 15 downe in a sowghe. And therewith the castell brake roffe and wallis and felle downe to the erthe. And Balyn felle downe and myght nat styrrer hande nor foote, and for the moste party of that castell was dede thorow the dolorouse stroke.

Ryght so lay kynge Pellam and Balyne three dayes. 20 (16)

Than Merlion com thydir, and toke up Balyn and gate hym a good horse, for hys was dede, and bade hym voyde oute of that contrey.

'Sir, I wolde have my damesell,' seyde Balyne. 25

'Loo,' seyde Merlion, 'where she lyeth dede.'

And kynge Pellam lay so many yerys sore wounded, and myght never be hole tyll that Galaad the Hawte Prynce heled hym in the queste of the Sankgreall. For in that place was parte of the bloode of oure Lorde Jesu Cryste, which 30 Joseph off Aramathy brought into thys londe. And there

1 *W* Pellam a grymme *C** Pellam cauzt in his hand a grym *F* (*Huth Merlin, f. 135d*): Court a une grant perche de fust qui estoit en mi la sale et le prent 2 *C* but balyn put 5 *C* seke somme wepen and soo fro chamber 7 folowed *not in C* 7-8 *C* chambyr that was merueillously wel dygite and rychely 9 *C* that myght be thought 10-11 *C** gold with four pelours of syluer that bare vp the table and vpon 14 *C* and felde hym *not in C* 15-16 *C* Pellam felle doune in a swoune 16-17 *C* the castel rooffe and wallis brake and fylle to the erthe 18-21 *C†* And so the moost parte of the castel that was falle doune thorough that dolorous stroke laye vpon Pellam and balyn thre dayes 23-4 *C* hym ryde oute 29 *C* Sangraille 29—p. 86, 2 *W* (*sidenote*): Here ys a pronosticacion of the Sank Greall 31—p. 86, 1 *C* Ioseph of Armathe . . . hym self lay in that

hymselff [lay] in that ryche bedde. And that was the spere
 whych Longeus smote oure Lorde with to the herte. And
 31^v kynge Pellam was nyghe of Joseph his kynne, and that was
 the moste worshipfullist man on lyve in tho dayes, and grete
 5 pité hit was of hys hurte, for thorow that stroke hit turned
 to grete dole, tray and tene.

Than departed Balyne frome Merlyon, 'for,' he seyde,
 'nevir in thys worlde we parte nother meete no more.' So
 he rode forthe thorow the fayre contreyes and citeys and
 10 founde the peple dede slayne on every syde, and all that evir
 were on lyve cryed and seyde, 'A, Balyne! Thou hast done
 and caused grete 'dommage' in thys contreyes! For the
 dolerous stroke thou gaff unto kynge Pellam thes three
 contreyes ar destroyed. And doute nat but the vengeance
 15 woll falle on the at the laste!' But whan Balyn was past tho
 contreyes he was passynge fayne, and so he rode eyght
 dayes or he mette with many adventure.

And at the last he com into a fayre foreyst in a valey, and
 was ware of a towure. And there besyde he mette with a
 20 grete horse tyed to a tree, and besyde there sate a fayre
 knyght on the grounde and made grete mournynge, and he
 was a lyckly man and a well made. Balyne seyde, 'God you
 save! Why be ye so hevy? Tell me, and I woll amende and
 I may to my power.'

25 'Sir knyght,' he seyde, 'thou doste me grete gryeff, for I
 was in m^rerly thoughtes and thou puttist me to more payne.'

Than Balyn went a litill frome hym and loked on hys
 horse, than herde Balyne hym sey thus: 'A, fayre lady! Why
 have ye brokyn my promyse? For ye promysed me to mete
 30 me here by noone. And I may curse you that ever ye gaff
 me that swerde, for with thys swerde I woll sle myselff,'
 and pulde hit out. And therewith com Balyne and sterte
 unto hym and toke hym by the honde.

1 C the same spere 4 C worshipful man that lyued 7-8 C Merlyn and
 sayd in this world we mete neuer nomore 10 evir not in C 11 and seyde not
 in C 11-12 done and not in C 12 W grete vengeance C* grete dommage
 F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 139a): tu nous a fait tant de mal que tous li mondes nel porroit
 amender 15 But not in C 17 many not in C 19-20 C he sawe a grete
 horse 25 C said he ageyne 26 W my thoughtes C* mery thoughtes F 'Fuiés
 de chi, sire vassaus! Vous m'avés mort, qui mon penser m'avés tolt. Je ne cuic que
 g'i soie ja mais si doucement comme jou i estoie orendroit' (*Huth Merlin*, f. 139d)
 29 C thow promysed 31 woll not in C 32 C therwith Balyn sterte

'Lette go my hande,' seyde the knyght, 'or ellis I shall sle the!'

'That shall nat nede,' seyde Balyn, 'for I shall promyse you my helpe to gete you youre lady and ye woll telle me where she ys.'

'What ys your name?' seyde the knyght.

'Sir, my name ys Balyne le Saveage.'

'A, sir, I know you well inowghe: ye ar the Knyght with the Two Swerdis, and the man of moste proues of youre hondis lyvynghe.'

'What ys your name?' seyde Balyne.

'My name ys Garnysh of the Mownte, a poore mannes sonne, and be my proues and hardynes a deuke made me knyght and gave me londis. Hys name ys duke Harmel, and hys doughter ys [she that I love, and she me, as I demed.]'

'Hou fer is she hens?' sayd Balyn.

'But six myle,' said the knyghte.

'Now ryde we hens,' sayde these two knyghtes.

So they rode more than a paas tyll that they cam to a fayr castel wel wallyd and dyched.

'I wyllle into the castel,' sayd Balen, 'and lokeyf she be ther.'

Soo he wente in and serched fro chamber to chambir and fond her bedde, but she was not there. Thenne Balen loked into a fayr litil gardyn, and under a laurel tre he sawe her lye upon a quylt of grene samyte, and a knyght in her armes fast halsynge eyther other, and under their hedes grasse and herbes. Whan Balen sawe her lye so with the fowlest knyghte that ever he sawe, and she a fair lady, thenne Balyn wente thurgh alle the chambers ageyne and told the knyghte how he fond her as she had slepte fast, and so brought hym in the place there she lay fast slepynghe.

And whan Garnysshe beheld hir so lyeng, for pure sorow his mouth and nose brast oute on bledynge, and with his swerd he smote of bothe their hedes. And thenne he maade sorowe oute of mesure and sayd, 'O, Balyn! Moche sorow hast thou brought unto me, for haddest thou not shewed me that syght I shold have passed my sorow.'

7 Sir not in C 12 C Garrysse of the mount 13 C But by my 14 C
Hermel 15 ff. Folios 32 and 33 are wanting in W. The text in square
brackets is based upon the corresponding passage in C.

'Forsoth,' said Balyn, 'I did it to this entent that it sholde better thy courage and that ye myght see and knowe her falshede, and to cause yow to leve love of suche a lady; God knoweth I dyd none other but as I wold ye dyd to me.'

- 5 'Allas,' said Garnysshe, 'now is my sorou doubel that I may not endure, now have I slayne that I moost loved in al my lyf!'

And therwith sodenly he rooffe hymself on his own swerd unto the hyltys.

- 10 When Balen sawe that, he dressid hym thensward, lest folke wold say he had slayne them. And so he rode forth, and within thre dayes he cam by a crosse; and theron were letters of gold wryten that said: 'it is not for no knyght alone to ryde toward this castel.' Thenne sawe he an old hore
15 gentylman comyng toward hym that sayd, 'Balyn le Saveage, thow passyst thy bandes to come this waye, therfor torne ageyne and it will availle the,' and he vanysshed away anone.

- And soo he herd an horne blowe as it had ben the dethe
20 of a best. 'That blast,' said Balyn, 'is blowen for me, for I am the pryse, and yet am I not dede.' Anone withal he sawe an honderd ladyes and many knyghtes that welcommed hym with fayr semblaunt and made hym passyng good chere unto his syght, and ledde hym into the castel, and ther was
25 daunsynge and mynstralsye and alle maner of joye. Thenne the chyef lady of the castel said, 'Knyghte with the Two Suerdys, ye must have adoo and juste with a knyght hereby that kepeth an iland, for ther may no man passe this way but he must juste or he passe.'

- 30 'That is an unhappy customme,' said Balyn, 'that a knyght may not passe this wey but yf he juste.'

'Ye shalle not have adoo but with one knyghte,' sayd the lady.

- 'Wel,' sayd Balyn, 'syn I shalle, therto I am redy; but
35 traveillynge men are ofte wery and their horses to, but though my hors be wery my hert is not wery. I wold be fayne ther my deth shold be.'

'Syr,' said a knyght to Balyn, 'methynketh your sheld is not good; I wille lene yow a byggar, therof I pray yow.' And

so he tooke the sheld that was unknowen and lefte his owne, and so rode unto the iland and put hym and his hors in a grete boote. And whan he came on the other syde he met with a damoyssel, and she said, 'O, knyght Balyn, why have ye lefte your owne sheld? Allas! ye have put yourself in grete daunger, for by your sheld ye shold have ben knowen. It is grete pyté of yow as ever was of knyght, for of thy prowessse and hardynes thou hast no felawe lyvyng.'

'Me repenteth,' said Balyn, 'that ever I cam within this countrey; but I maye not torne now ageyne for shame, and what aventure shalle falle to me, be it lyf or dethe, I wille take the adventure that shalle come to me.'

And thenne he loked on his armour and understood he was wel armed, and therwith blessid hym and mounted upon his hors.

Thenne afore hym he sawe come rydyng oute of a castel a knyght, and his hors trapped all reed, and hymself in the same colour. Whan this knyghte in the reed beheld Balyn hym thought it shold be his broder Balen by cause of his two swerdys, but by cause he knewe not his sheld he demed it was not he. And so they aventryd theyr speres and came merveillously fast togyders, and they smote other in the sheldes, but theire speres and theire cours were soo bygge that it bare doune hors and man, that they lay bothe in a swoun.

But Balyn was brysed sore with the falle of his hors, for he was wery of travaille. And Balan was the fyrst that rose on foote and drewe his swerd and wente toward Balyn, and he aroos and wente ageynst hym; but Balan smote Balyn fyrste, and he put up his shelde and smote hym thorow the shelde and tamyd his helme. Thenne Balyn smote hym ageyne with that unhappy swerd and wel nyghe had fellyd his broder Balan, and so they fought ther togyders tyl theyr brethes faylled.

Thenne Balyn loked up to the castel and sawe the towres stand ful of ladyes. Soo they went unto bataille ageyne and wounded everyche other dolefully, and thenne they brethed oftymes, and so wente unto bataille that alle the place thereas they fought was blood reed. And att that tyme ther was none of them bothe but they hadde eyther smyten other

seven grete woundes so that the lest of them myght have ben the dethe of the myghtyest gyaunt in this world.

Thenne they wente to batail ageyn so merveillously that doubte it was to here of that bataille for the grete blood shedynge; and their hawberkes unnailled, that naked they were on every syde. Atte last Balan, the yonger broder, withdrew hym a lytel and leid hym doune. Thenne said Balyn le Saveage, 'What knyghte arte thou? For or now I found never no knyght that matched me.'

10 'My name is,' said he, 'Balan, broder unto the good knyght Balyn.'

'Allas!' sayd Balyn, 'that ever I shold see this day,' and therwith he felle backward in a swoone.

Thenne Balan yede on al four feet and handes, and put 15 of the helme of his broder, and myght not knowe hym by the vysage, it was so ful hewen and bledde; but whan he awoke he sayd, 'O, Balan, my broder! Thou hast slayne me and I the, wherfore alle the wyde world shalle speke of us bothe.'

'Allas!' sayd Balan, 'that ever I sawe this day that thorow 20 myshap I myght not knowe yow! For I aspyed wel your two swerdys, but bycause ye had another shild I demed ye had ben another knyght.'

'Allas!' saide Balyn, 'all that maade an unhappy knyght in the castel, for he caused me to leve myn owne shelde to 25 our bothes destruction. And yf I myght lyve I wold destroye that castel for ylle customes.'

'That were wel done,' said Balan, 'for I had never grace to departe fro hem syn that I cam hyther, for here it happed me to slee a knyght that kept this iland, and syn myght I 30 never departe, and no more shold ye, broder, and ye myght have slayne me as ye have and escaped yourself with the lyf.'

Ryght so cam the lady of the toure with four knyghtes and six ladyes and six yomen unto them, and there she herd how they made her mone eyther to other and sayd, 'We 35 came bothe oute of one <w>ombe, that is to say one moders bely, and so shalle we lye bothe in one pytte.' So Balan prayd the lady of her gentylnesse for his true servyse that she wold burye them bothe in that same place there the bataille was done, and she graunted hem with wepyng it 40 shold be done rychely in the best maner.

'Now wille ye sende for a preest that we may receyve our sacrament and receyve the blessid body of oure Lord Jesu Cryst?'

'Ye,' said the lady, 'it shalle be done;' and so she sente for a preest and gaf hem her ryghtes. 5

'Now,' sayd Balen, 'whan we are buryed in one tombe and the mensyon made over us how two bretheren slewe eche other, there wille never good knyght nor good man see our tombe but they wille pray for our soules,' and so alle the ladyes and gentylwymen wepte for pyté. Thenne anone 10
Balan dyed, but Balyn dyed not tyl the mydnyghte after. And so were they buryed bothe, and the lady lete make a mensyon of Balan how he was ther slayne by his broders handes, but she knewe not Balyns name.

In the morne cam Merlyn and lete wryte Balyns name 15 (19)
on the tombe with letters of gold that 'here lyeth Balyn le Savage that was the knyght with the two swerdes and he that smote the dolorous stroke.' Also Merlyn lete make there a bedde, that ther shold never man lye therin but he wente oute of his wytte. Yet Launcelot de Lake fordyd 20
that bed thorow his noblesse.

And anone after Balyn was dede Merlyn toke his swerd and toke of the pomel and set on another pomel. So Merlyn] bade a knyght that stood before hym to handyll the swerde, *W* 34^r
and he assayde hit and myght nat handyll hit. Than 25
Merlion lowghe.

'Why lawghe ye?' seyde the knyght.

'Thys ys the cause,' seyde Merlion: 'there shall never man handyll thys swerde but the beste knyght of the worlde, and that shall be sir Launcelot other ellis Galahad, hys 30
sonne. And Launcelot with hys swerde shall sle the man in the worlde that he lovith beste: that shall be sir Gawayne.'

And all thys he lette wryte in the pomell of the swerde.

Than Merlion lette make a brygge of iron and of steele into that ilonde, and hit was but halff a foote brode, 'and 35
there shall never man passe that brygge nother have hardynesse to go over hit but yf he were a passynge good man withoute trechery or vylany.' Also the scawberd off Balyns

p. 90, 35 *C* one tombe p. 91, 23 *End of the lacuna in W.* 24 *C* hym handeld
32 *C* loued best 37 hit *not in C* 37-8 *C* good man and a good knyght withoute

swerde Merlion lefte hit on thys syde the ilonde, that Galaad sholde fynde hit. Also Merlion lette make by hys suttelyté that Balynes swerde was put into a marbil stone stondynge upryght as grete as a mylstone, and hoved
 5 allwayes above the watir, and dud many yeres. And so by adventure hit swamme downe by the streme unto the cité of Camelot, that ys in Englysh called Wynchester, and that same day Galahad the Haute Prynce com with kynge Arthure, and so Galaad brought with hym the scawberde
 10 and encheved the swerde that was in the marble stone hovyngge uppon the watir. And on Whytsonday he enchevyd the swerde, as hit ys rehersed in THE BOOKE OF THE SANKGREALL.

Sone aftir thys was done Merlion com to kynge Arthur
 15 and tolde hym of the dolerous stroke that Balyn gaff kynge Pellam, and how Balyn and Balan fought togydirs the merveyl[yste] batayle that evir was herde off, and how they were buryed bothe in one tombe. 'Alas!' seyde kynge Arthure, 'thys ys the grettist pité that ever I herde telle off of two
 20 knyghtes, for in thys worlde I knewe never such two knyghtes.'

THUS ENDITH THE TALE OF BALYN AND BALAN, TWO BRETHIRNE THAT WERE BORNE IN NORTHUMBIRLONDE, THAT WERE TWO PASSYNGE GOOD KNYGHTES AS EVER WERE IN THO
 25 DAYES.

EXPLICIT.

1 thys syde *not in C* 4 *C* and the stone houted 15 *C* to kyng 16-17 *W*
 merveylous 19-20 *C* that ouer I herd telle of two knyghtes for in the world
 I knowe not suche 22-5 *C* bretheren born in northüberlād good knyghtes
 Sequitur iii liber Explicit *not in C*

III

TORRE AND PELLYNOR

[*Winchester MS.*, ff. 35^r-44^v;
Caxton, Book III]

CAXTON'S RUBRICS

1. How kyng Arthur took a wyf and wedded Guenever, doughter to Leodegran, kyng of the londe of Camelerd, wyth whome he had the Rounde Table.
2. How the knyghtes of the Rounde Table were ordeyned and theyr syeges blessyd by the Bysshop of Caunterburye.
3. How a poure man <came> rydyng upon a lene mare and desyred of kyng Arthur to make his sone knyght.
4. How syr Tor was knowen for sone of kyng Pellynore and how Gawayn was made knyght.
5. How atte feste of the weddyng of kyng Arthur to Guenever a whyte herte came into the halle and thyrty couple houndes, and how a brachet pynched the herte whiche was taken awaye.
6. How syr Gawayn rode for to fetch ageyn the herte and how two brethern fought eche ageynst other for the herte.
7. How the herte was chaced into a castel and there slayn, and how Gauwayn slewe a lady.
8. How four knyghtes faught ayenst sir Gawayn and Gaheryse, and how they were overcom and her lyves saved atte request of four ladyes.
9. How syr Tor rode after the knyght wyth the brachet and of his adventure by the waye.
10. How syr Tor fonde the brachet wyth a lady and how a knyght assayled hym for the sayd brachet.
11. How syr Tor overcame the knyght and how he lost hys heed at the requeste of a lady.
12. How kyng Pellenore rode after the lady and the knyght that ladde her awaye, and how a lady desyred helpe of hym, and how he faught wyth ii knyghtes for that lady, of whome he slewe that one at the fyrst stroke.
13. How kyng Pellynore gate the lady and brought hyr to Camelot to the courte of kyng Arthur.
14. How on the waye he herde two knyghtes as he laye by nyght in a valey, and of other adventures.
15. How whan he was comen to Camelot he was sworne upon a book to telle the trouthe of his queste.

IN the begynnyng of Arthure, aftir he was chosyn kynge 35^r (1)
 by adventure and by grace, for the moste party of the
 barowns knew nat he was Uther Pendragon son but as
 Merlyon made hit opynly knowyn, but yet many kyngis
 and lordis hylde hym grete werre for that cause. But well 5
 Arthur overcom hem all: the moste party dayes of hys lyff
 he was ruled by the counceile of Merlyon. So hit felle on
 a tyme kyng Arthur seyde unto Merlion, 'My barownes
 woll let me have no reste but nedis I muste take a wyff,
 and I wolde none take but by thy counceile and advice.' 10

'Hit ys well done,' seyde Merlyon, 'that ye take a wyff,
 for a man of youre bounté and nobles sholde not be withoute
 a wyff. Now is there ony,' seyde Marlyon, 'that ye love
 more than another?'

'Ye,' seyde kyng Arthure, 'I love Gwenyvere, the kynges 15
 doughtir of Lodegrean, of the londe of Camelerde, the
 whyche holdyth in his house the Table Rounde that ye
 tolde me he had hit of my fadir Uther. And this damesell
 is the moste valyaunte and fayryst that I know lyvyng, or
 yet that ever I coude fynde.' 20

'Sertis,' seyde Marlyon, 'as of her beauté and fayrenesse
 she is one of the fayrest on lyve. But and ye loved hir not
 so well as ye do, I scholde fynde you a damesell of beauté
 and of goodnesse that sholde lyke you and please you, and
 youre herte were nat sette. But thereas mannes herte is 25
 sette he woll be loth to returne.'

'That is trouthe,' seyde kyng Arthur.

But Marlyon warned the kyng covertly that Gwenyver
 was nat holsom for hym to take to wyff. For he warned hym
 that Launcelot scholde love hir, and sche hym agayne, and 30
 so he turned his tale to the adventures of the Sankegreall.

Then Merlion desyred of the kyng for to have men with
 hym that scholde enquire of Gwenyver, and so the kyng
 gr(a)unted hym. And so Merlyon wente forthe unto kyng
 Lodegean of Camylerde, and tolde hym of the desire of 35
 the kyng that he wolde have unto his wyff Gwenyver, his

3 C that he was 5 hym *not in C* 6 C for the mooste 7 C ruled moche
 10 C by thynne aduys 21 C Syre sayd Merlyn 25 C a mans herte 35 C
 Camyllerd

doughter. 'That is to me,' seyde kyng Lodegreans, 'the beste tydynges that ever I herde, that so worthy a kyng of prouesse and noblesse wol wedde my doug[h]ter. And as for
 35^v my londis, I wolde geff hit hym yf I wyste hyt myght please
 5 hym, but he hath londis inow, he nedith none. But I shall sende hym a gyffte that shall please hym muche more, for I shall gyff hym the Table Rounde which Uther, hys fadir, gaff me. And whan hit ys fulle complete there ys an hondred knyghtes and fyfty. And as for an hondred good knyghtes,
 10 I have myselff, but I wante fyfty, for so many hathe be slayne in my dayes.' And so kyng Lodgreauce delyverd hys doughtir Gwenyver unto Merlion, and the Table Rounde with the hondred knyghtes; and so they rode freysshly with grete royalté, what by watir and by londe,
 15 tyll that they com nyghe unto London.

(2) Whan kynge Arthure herde of the commynge of quene Gwenyver and the hondred knyghtes with the Table Rounde, than kynge Arthure made grete joy for hir commyng and that ryche presente, and seyde opynly, 'Thys fayre lady ys
 20 passyngly wellcome to me, for I have loved hir longe, and therefore there ys nothyng so leeff to me. And thes knyghtes with the Table Rownde pleasith me more than ryght grete rychesse.'

And in all haste the kynge lete ordayne for the maryage
 25 and the coronacion in the moste hono[r]abylst wyse that cowude be devised. 'Now, Merlion,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'go thou and aspye me in all thys londe fyfty knyghtes which bene of moste prouesse and worship.' So within shorte tyme Merlion had founde such knyghtes that sholde
 30 fulfille twenty and eyght knyghtes, but no mo wolde he fynde. Than the Bysshop of Caunturbiry was [f]ette, and he blyssed the segis with grete royalté and devocion, and there sette the eyght and twenty knyghtes in her segis. And whan thys was done Merlion seyde, 'Fayre sirres, ye muste
 35 all aryse and com to kynge Arthure for to do hym omage; he woll the better be in wylle to maynteyne you.' And so

4 C hym wist I it myght

7-8 C Vtherpendragon gaue me

10 C but I fawt

10-11 C haue ben . . . Ladegreans

16 quene *not in C*

25 W hononabylst

C honorable

30-1 C mo he conde fynde

31 W sette

36 C he will haue

the better wil

they arose and dud their omage. And whan they were gone Merlion founde in every sege lettirs of golde that tolde the knyghtes namys that had sitte[n] there, but two segis were voyde.

And so anone com in yonge Gawayne and asked the kynge 5 a gyffte. 'Aske,' seyde the kynge, 'and I shall graunte you.'

'Sir, I aske that ye shall make me knyght that same day that ye shall wedde dame Gwenyver.'

'I woll do hit with a goode wylle,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'and do unto you all the worship that I may, for I muste 10 be reson ye ar my nevew, my sistirs son.'

Forthwithall there com a poore man into the courte and (3) brought with hym a fayre yonge man of eyghtene yere of 36^r ayge, rydyngge uppon a lene mare. And the poore man asked all men that he mette, 'Where shall I fynde kynge Arthure?' 15

'Yondir he ys,' seyde the knyghtes.

'Wolt tho[u] onythyngge with hym?'

'Ye,' seyde the poore man, 'therefore I cam hydir.' And as sone as he com before the kynge he salewed hym and seyde, 'Kynge Arthure, the floure of all kyngis, I besече 20 Jesu save the! Sir, hit was tolde me that as thys tyme of youre maryaige ye wolde gyff ony man the gyffte that he wolde aske you excepte hit were unresonable.'

'That ys trouthe,' seyde the kynge, 'such cryes I lette make, and that woll I holde, so hit appayre nat my realme 25 nor myne astate.'

'Ye say well and graciously,' seyde the pore man. 'Sir, I aske nothyngge elis but that ye woll make my sonne knyght.'

'Hit ys a grete thyngge thou askyst off me,' seyde the kynge. 'What ys thy name?' seyde the kynge to the poore 30 man.

'Sir, my name ys Aryes, the cowherde.'

'Whethir commith thys of the other ells of thy sonne?' seyde the kynge.

'Nay, sir,' seyde Aryes, 'thys desyre commyth of my son 35 and nat off me. For I shall telle you, I have thirtene sonnes, and all they woll falle to what laboure I putte them and woll

3 *W* sitter *C* sitten 6 *C* graunte it yow 8 *C* faire Gweneuer 10 *first*
I repeated in W. 20 *C* O kyng *C* all knyghtes and kynges 21 *C* at
 23 *C* wold aske oute excepte 28 *C* my sone here a knyghte

be ryght glad to do laboure; but thys chylde woll nat laboure for nothyng that my wyff and I may do, but allwey he woll be shotyng, or castyng dartes, and glad for to se batayles and to beholde knyghtes. And allwayes day and
 5 nyght he desyrith of me to be made knyght.'

'What ys thy name?' seyde the kyng unto the yonge man.

'Sir, my name ys Torre.' Than the kyng behelde hym faste and saw he was passyn[g]ly well vysaged and well made
 10 of hys yerys.

'Well,' seyde kyng Arthure unto Aryes the cowerde, 'go fecche all thy sonnes before me that I may see them.'

And so the pore man dud. And all were shapyn muche lyke the poore man, but Torre was nat lyke hym nother in
 15 shappe ne in countenaunce, for he was muche more than ony of them.

'Now,' seyde kyng Arthure unto the cowerde, 'where ys the swerde he shall [b]e made knyght withall?'

'Hyt ys here,' seyde Torre.

20 'Take hit oute of the shethe,' sayde the kyng, 'and requyre me to make you knyght.'

Than Torre alyght of hys mare and pulled oute hys
 36 swerde, knelyng and requyryng the kyng to make hym knyght, and that he made hym knyght of the Table Rounde.

25 'As for a knyght I woll make you,' and therewith smote him in the necke with the swerde. 'Be ye a good knyght, and so I pray to God ye may be, and if ye be of proues and worthynes ye shall be of the Table Rounde.'

'Now, Merlion,' seyde Arthure, 'whethir thys Torre
 30 shall be a goode man?'

'Yee, hardely, sir, he ought to be a good man for he ys com of good kynrede as ony on lyve, and of kynges bloode.'

'How so, sir?' seyde the kyng.

'I shall telle you,' seyde Merlion. 'Thys poore man
 35 Aryes the cowerde ys nat his fadir, for he ys no sybbe to hym; for kyng Pellynore ys hys fadir.'

8 C Tor

12 go *not in C*

14-15 C was not lyke none of hem al in shape

18 W shall me made

26 C swerd sayeg

27 C god so ye may

29 C

whether S wether

31 hardely *not in C*

32 C comen of as good

a man as ony is on lyue

35 C no thyng syb

'I suppose nat,' seyde the cowherde.

'Well, fecch thy wyff before me,' seyde Merlion, 'and she shall nat sey nay.'

Anone the wyff was fette forth, which was a fayre houswyff. And there she answerde Merlion full womanly, and there she tolde the kynge and Merlion that whan she was a mayde and wente to mylke hir kyne, 'there mette with me a sterne knyght, and half be force he had my maydynhode. And at that tyme he begate my sonne Torre, and he toke away fro me my grayhounde that I had that tyme with me, and seyde he wolde kepe the grayhounde for my love.'

'A,' seyde the cowherde, 'I wente hit had nat be thus, but I may beleve hit well, for he had never no tacchys of me.'

Sir Torre seyde unto Merlion, 'Dishonoure nat my modir.'

'Sir,' seyde Merlion, 'hit ys more for your worship than hurte, for youre fadir ys a good knyght and a kynge, and he may ryght well avaunce you and youre modir both, for ye were begotyn or evir she was wedded.'

'That ys trouthe,' seyde the wyff.

'Hit ys the lesse gryff unto me,' seyde the cowherde.

So on the morne kynge Pellynor com to the courte of kyng Arthure. And he had grete joy of hym and tolde hym of sir Torre, how he was hys sonne, and how he had made hym knyght at the requeste of the cowherde. Whan kynge Pellynor behelde sir Torre he plesed hym muche. So the kynge made Gawayne knyght, but sir Torre was the firste he made at that feste.

'What ys the cause,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'that there ys two placis voyde in the segis?'

'Sir,' seyde Merlion, 'there shall no man sitte in tho placis but they that shall be moste of worship. But in the Sege Perelous there shall nevyr man sitte but one, and yf there be ony so hardy to do hit he shall be destroyed, he that shall sitte therein shall have no felowe.' And therewith Merlyon toke kynge Pellinor by the honde and, in that

1 C I suppose nay 4 C was fet which 7 hir not in C C met with her
12-13 C I wende not thys but 24 C Arthur whiche had grete ioye of hym and told hym 33 C they that be of moost worship *Misprint in S* (they be)

one hande nexte the two segis and the Sege Perelous, he seyde in opyn audiens, 'Thys your place, for beste ar ye worthy to sitte thereinne of ony that here ys.'

And thereat had sir Gawayne grete envy and tolde
 5 Gaherys hys brothir, 'Yondir knyght ys putte to grete worship, whych grevith me sore, for he slewe oure fadir kynge Lott. Therefore I woll sle hym,' seyde Gawayne, 'with a swerde that was sette me that ys passynge trench-
 eaunte.'

10 'Ye shall nat so,' seyde Gaheris, 'at thys tyme, for as now I am but youre squyre, and whan I am made knyght I woll be avenged on hym; and therefore, brothir, hit ys beste to suffir tyll another tyme, that we may have hym oute of courte, for and we dud so we shall trouble thys hyghe feste.'

15 'I woll well,' seyde Gawayne.

(5) Than was thys feste made redy, and the kynge was wedded at Camelot unto dame Gwenyvere in the chirche of Seynte Stephyns with grete solempnité. Than as every man was sette as hys degré asked, Merlion wente to all the knyghtes
 20 of the Round Table and bade hem sitte styll, 'that none of you remeve, for ye shall se a straunge and a mervailous adventure.'

Ryght so as they sate there com rennyng in a whyght herte into the hall, and a whyght brachet nexte hym, and
 25 thirty couple of blacke rennyng houndis com afftir with a grete cry. And the herte wente aboute the Rounde Table, and as he wente by the syde-bourdis the brachet ever boote hym by the buttocke and pulde on a pece, wherethorow the herte lope a grete lepe and overthrew a knyght that
 30 sate at the syde-bourde. And therewith the knyght arose and toke up the brachet, and so wente forthe oute of the halle and toke hys horse and rode hys way with the brachett.

Ryght so com in the lady on a whyght palferey and cryed

¹ *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 156b): et Merlins le mainne droit au siege *M* has mistaken mainne for main—that (*C* the) one hande—and rendered droit by nexte. The resulting phrase is meaningless. 2 *C* This is your place 8 *C* sente me
 10–11 *C* at this tyme For at this tyme I am 13 *C* ye suffre 15 *C* said
 gauayn as ye wylle 16 *C* hyghe feeste 19 *C* set after his degree 20–1
C none of hem 27 *C* by other boordes ever not in *C* 29 *W* hand in
 margin pointing to this line. 30 *C* boord syde

alowde unto kyng Arthure and seyde, 'Sir, suffir me nat to have thys despite, for the brachet ys myne that the knyght hath ladde away.'

'I may nat do therewith,' seyde the kyng.

So with thys there com a knyght rydyng all armed on a grete horse, and toke the lady away with forse wyth hym, and ever she cryed and made grete dole. So whan she was gone the kyng was gladde, for she made such a noyse.

'Nay,' seyde Merlion, 'ye may nat leve hit so, thys adventure, so lyghtly, for thes adventures muste be brought to an ende, other ellis hit woll be disworshyp to you and to youre feste.'

'I woll,' seyde the kyng, 'that all be done by your advice.' Than he lette calle sir Gawayne, for he muste brynge agayne the whyght herte. 'Also, sir, ye muste lette call sir Torre, for he muste brynge agay[ne] the brachette and the knyght, other ellis sle hym. Also lette calle kyng Pellynor, for he muste brynge agayne the lady and the knyght, other ellis sle hym, and thes three knyghtes shall do mervayles adventures or they com agayne.'

Than were they called all three as hit ys rehersed afore and every of them toke their charge and armed them surely. But sir Gawayne had the firste requeste, and therefore we woll begynne at hym, and so forthe to thes other.

HERE BEGYNNITH THE FYRST BATAYLE THAT EVER SIR GAWAYNE DED AFTER HE WAS MADE KNYGHT.

Syr Gawayne rode more than a pace and Gaheris his brothir rode with hym in the stede of a squyre to do hym servyse. So as they rode they saw two knyghtes fyght on horseback passyng sore. So sir Gawayne and hys brothir rode betwyxte them and asked them for what cause they foughte. So one of the knyghtes seyde, 'We fyght but for a symple mater, for we two be two brethirne and be begotyn of o[n]e man and of o[n]e woman.'

'Alas!' seyde sir Gawayne.

1 C to kyng S for the kyng and seyde not in C 9 hit so not in C
10-11 C brought agayne or els F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 158d); iceste daarrainne aventure
est vostre a achievever 24 and . . . other not in C 25-6 Here begynnith . . .
was made knyght not in C 32 C so the one knyght ansuerd and sayd 33-p. 104,
1 C bretheren born & hegoten (S begoten) of one man & of one woman allas said
sir gauayn why do ye so syr said the eldar ther cam

'Sir,' seyde the elther brother, 'there com a whyght herte
 thys way thys same day and many houndis chaced hym,
 and a whyght brachett was allwey nexte hym. And we
 undirstood hit was an adventure made for the hyghe feste
 5 of Arthure. And therefore I wolde have gone afftir to have
 wonne me worship, and here my yonger brothir seyde he
 wolde go aftir the harte for he was bygger knyght than I.
 And for thys cause we felle at debate, and so we thought to
 preff which of us was the bygger knyght.'

10 'Forsoth thys ys a symple cause,' seyde Gawayne, 'for
 uncouth men ye sholde debate withall, and no brothir with
 38* brothir. Therefore do be my counceyle: other ellis I woll
 have ado with you bothe, other yelde you to me and that ye
 go unto kynge Arthure and yelde you unto hys grace.'

15 'Sir knyght,' seyde the two brethirne, 'we are forfoughten
 and mucche bloode have we loste thorow oure wylfulness,
 and therefore we wolde be loth to have ado with you.'

'Than do as I woll have you do,' seyde sir Gawayne.

'We agré to fulfille your wylle. But by whom shall we
 20 sey that we be thydir sente?'

'Ye may sey, by the knyght that folowith the queste of
 the herte. Now what ys youre name?' seyde Gawayne.

'Sir, my name ys Surluse of the Foreyste,' seyde the
 elder.

25 'And my name ys,' seyde the yonger, 'Bryan of the
 Foreyste.'

And so they departed and wente to the kyngis courte,
 and sir Gawayne folowed hys queste.

And as he folowed the herte by the cry of the howndis,
 30 evyn before hym there was a grete ryver; and the herte
 swam over. And as sir Gawayn wolde a folowed afftir there
 stood a knyght on the othir syde and seyde, 'Sir knyght,
 com nat over aftir thys harte but if thou wolt juste
 with me.'

35 'I woll nat fayle as for that,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'to folow
 the queste that I am inne.'

2 same *not in C* 7 *C* better knyght 9 *C* better knyght. 10 Forsoth *not in C*
 for *not in C* 12-13 *C* therfor but yf ye wil do by my couceil I wil haue ado
 with yow that is ye shal yelde 18 *C* haue yow said 19 *C* we wille agree
 22 *C* the herte that was whyte 23 *C* Surlouse 28-9 *C* Syr gauayne on his
 quest and as gauayne 31 *C* ouer the other syde

And anone they gate their glayves, and ran togydirs fulle harde, but Gawayne smote hym of hys horse and than he bade hym yelde hym. 'Nay,' seyde the knyght, 'nat so, for thoughe ye have the better of me on horsebak, I pray the, valyaunte knyght, alyght on foote and macche we to- 5 gidir with oure swerdis.'

'What ys youre name?' seyde sir Gawayne.

'Sir, my name ys Alardyne of the Oute Iles.'

Than aythir dressed their shyldes and smote togydir, but sir Gawayne smote hym so harde thorow the helme that hit 10 wente to the brayne and the knyght felle downe dede. 'A,' seyde Gaherys, 'that was a myghty stroke of a yonge knyght.'

Than sir Gawayne and Gaherys folowed afftir 'the whyte (7) herte, and lete slyppe at the herte thre couple of greyhoundes. And so they chace the herte into a castel, and in 15 the chyef place of the castel they slew the hert.¹ Ryght soo there came a knyght oute of a chambir with a swerde drawyn in hys honde and slew two of the grayhoundes evyn in the syght of sir Gawayne, and the remanente he chaced with hys swerde oute of the castell. And whan he com agayne 20 he seyde, 'A, my whyght herte, me repentis that thou arte 38^v dede, for my soveraigne lady gaff the to me, and evyll have I kepte the, and thy dethe shall be evyl bought and I lyve.' And anone he wente into hys chambir and armyd hym, and com oute fersely. And there he mette with sir Gawayne and 25 he seyde, 'Why have ye slayne my howndys? 'For they dyd but their kynde, and¹ I wolde that ye had wrokyn youre angir uppon me rather than uppon a dome beste.'

1 C gat there speres† F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 160a): glaive 2-8 W (*sidenote*): How
sir Gawayne slew Alerdyne knyght of the Iles 4 for not in C 5 C a
foote 8 Sir my name is not in C C Alardyn of the Ilys 13-16 W
folowed afftir ryght so C* Thene Gauayne and Gaheryse rode more than a paas
after the whyte herte . . . slewe the hert syr gauayne and gaheryse folowed after
Ryght soo F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 161a): Et Gavains qui les (= les chiens) vint
ataignant les commenche a crier et a huer après le chierf . . . Tant a li cierf (*sic*)
fui et li chien cachié et Gavains feri des esperons entre lui et Gahariet, tant (*sic*)
qu'il issirent del bois par deviers destre, et lors voient devant eus en une plaigne
une fortrece moult bien seant . . . et li chiers qui trueve la porte ouverte se met
dedens et s'adrece viers la sale et entre laiens . . . Et . . . il orent tantost le chierf mort
et occhis' (*Homzoteleuton in W*) 23 C dere bought 25-6 and he seyde
not in C (he refers to Gawayne) 26-7 C* houndes said syr gauayn for
they dyd but their kynde and leuer I had ye had wroken F (*Huth Merlin*, f.
161a): il ont fait chou que il durent

'Thou seyst trouth,' seyde the knyght, 'I have avenged me on thy howndys, and so I woll on the or thou go.'

Than sir Gawayne alyght on foote and dressed hys shyld, and stroke togydirs myghtyly and clave their shyldis
 5 and stooned their helmys and brake their hawbirkes that their blo[de] thirled downe to their feete. So at the last sir Gawayne smote so harde that the knyght felle to the erthe, and than he cryed mercy and yelded hym and besought hym as he was a jantyll knyght to save hys lyff.

10 'Thou shalt dey,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'for sleynge of my howndis.'

'I woll make amendys,' seyde the knyght, 'to my power.'

But sir Gawayne wolde no mercy have, but unlaced hys helme to have strekyn of hys hede.

15 Ryght so com hys lady oute of a chambir and felle over hym, and so he smote of hir hede by myssefortune. 'Alas,' seyde Gaherys, 'that ys fowle and shamefully done, for that shame shall never frome you. Also ye sholde gyff mercy unto them that aske mercy, for a knyght withoute mercy
 20 ys withoute worship.' So sir Gawayne was sore astoned of the deth of this fayre lady, that he wyst nat what he dud, and seyde unto the knyght, 'Aryse, I woll gyff the mercy.'

'Nay, nay,' seyde the knyght, 'I take no forse of thy mercy now, for thou haste slayne with vilony my love and my lady
 25 that I loved beste of all erthly t[h]ynge.'

'Me sore repentith hit,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'for I mente the stroke unto the. But now thou shalt go unto kynge Arthure and telle hym of thyne adventure and how thou arte overcom by the knyght that wente in the queste of the
 30 whyght harte.'

'I take no force,' seyde the knyght, 'whether I lyve othir dey.' But at the last, for feare of dethe, he swore to go unto kynge Arthure, and he made hym to bere the one grehownde before hym on hys horse and the other behynde hym.

35 'What ys youre name,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'or we departe?'

'My name ys,' seyde the knyght, 'Blamoure of the
 39^r Maryse.' And so he departed towarde Camelot.

6 *C* blood ranne
 auenture

9 *C* as he was a knyghte and gentylman
 20 *C* was so stonyed
 24 with vilony *not in C*

16 *C* by mis-
 26-7 *C* for I

thoughte to stryke unto the

And sir Gawayne wente unto the castell and made hym (8)
 redy to lye there all nyght and wolde have unarmed hym.
 'What woll ye do?' seyde Gaherys, 'Woll ye unarme you
 in thys contrey? Ye may thynke ye have many fooes in thys
 contrey.' He had no sunner seyde the worde but there com 5
 in four knyghtes well armed and assayled sir Gawayne harde,
 and seyde unto hym, 'Thou new made knyght, thou haste
 shamed thy knyghthode, for a knyght withoute mercy ys
 dishonoured. Also thou haste slayne a fayre lady to thy
 grete shame unto the worldys ende, and doute the nat thou 10
 shalt have grete nede of mercy or thou departe frome us.'
 And therewith one of hem smote sir Gawayne a grete stroke,
 that nygh he felle to the erthe. And Gaherys smote hym
 agayne sore. And so they were assayled on the one syde and
 on the othir, that sir Gawayne and Gaherys were in jouparté 15
 of their lyves. And one with a bowe, an archer, smote sir
 Gawayne thorow the arme, that hit greved hym wondirly sore.

And as they sholde have bene slayne, there com four
 fayre ladies and besought the knyghtes of grace for sir
 Gawayne. And goodly at the requeste of thes ladies they 20
 gaff sir Gawayne and Gaherys their lyves and made them
 to yelde them as presoners. Than sir Gawayne and Gaherys
 made grete dole. 'Alas,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'myn arme
 grevith me sore, that I am lyke to be maymed,' and so made
 hys complaynte pytewusly. 25

So erly on the morne there com to sir Gawayne one of
 the four ladies that had herd hys complaynte, and seyde,

'Sir knyght, what chere?'

'Nat good.'

'Why so? Hit ys youre owne defaute,' seyde the lady, 30
 'for ye have done passynge foule for the sleynge of thys
 lady, the whych woll be grete vylony unto you. But be ye
 nat of kynge Arthurs?' seyde the lady.

'Yes, truly,' seyde sir Gawayne.

'What ys youre name?' seyde [the] lady, 'for ye muste 35
 telle or ye passe.'

4 C many enemyes here 14 assayled *not in C†* F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 163c): et
 l'assaillent de toutes les pars que il puent a lui venir 24 that *not in C* 24 W
 lyke 29 C not good said he 30 Why so *not in C* 33 C of kynge
 Arthurs kyne 35 W seyde sir lady for *not in C*

'Fayre lady, my name ys sir Gawayne, the kynges son Lotte of Orkeney, and my modir ys kynge Arthurs sister.'

'Than ar ye nevew unto the kynge,' seyde the lady.
 39^v 'Well,' seyde the lady, 'I shall so speke for you that ye shall
 5 have <leve> to go unto kynge Arthure for hys love.'

And so she departed and told the four knyghtes how the presonere was kynge Arthurs nevew, 'and hys name ys sir Gawayne, kynge Lottis son of Orkeney.' So they gaff hym leve and toke hym the hartes hede with hym because
 10 hit was in the queste. And than they delyverde hym undir thys promyse, that he sholde bere the dede lady with hym on thys maner: the hede of her was hanged aboute hys necke, and the hole body of hir before hym on hys horse mane.

Ryght so he rode forthe unto Camelot. And anone as
 15 he was com Merlion dud make kynge Arthure that sir Gawayne was sworne to telle of hys adventure, and how he slew the lady, and how he wolde gyff no mercy unto the knyght, wherethorow the lady was slayne. Than the kynge and the queene were gretely displeased with sir Gawayne
 20 for the sleynge of the lady, and there by ordynaunce of the queene there was sette a queste of ladyes uppon sir Gawayne, and they juged hym for ever whyle he lyved to be with all ladyes and to fyght for hir quarels; and ever that he sholde be curteyse, and never to refuse mercy to hym that askith
 25 mercy. Thus was sir Gawayne sworne uppon the four Evaungelistis that he sholde never be ayenste lady ne jantillwoman but if he fyght for a lady and hys adversary fyghtith for another. AND THUS ENDITH THE ADVENTURE OF SIR GAWAYNE THAT HE DUD AT THE MARIAGE OF ARTHURE.

(9) 30 Whan sir Torre was redy he mounted uppon horsebacke and rode afftir the knyght with the brachett. And so as he rode he mette with a dwarff suddeynly, that smote hys horse on the hede with a staff, that he reled bakwarde hys spere lengthe. 'Why dost thou so?' seyde sir Torre.

35 'For thou shalt nat passe thys way but if thou juste withe yondir knyghtes of the pavilions.'

4 Well seyde the lady *not in C* 4-5 *C* ye shall haue conduyte to go 8-9 *C*
 and they gaf hym the hertes hede by cause 10 *C* delyuere syr Gauayne 12 *C*
 in this maner 15-16 *C* merlyn desyred of kyng Arthur . . . shold be sworne
 29 *C* Arthur Amen 30 *C* Than Syre Tor . . . his horsbak

Than was sir Torre ware where were two pavilions, and grete spery[s] stood oute, and two shildes hangynge on treys by the pavilions.

'I may nat tarry,' seyde sir Torre, 'for I am in a queste that I muste nedys folow.'

'Thou shalt nat passe thys wey,' seyde the dwarff, and therewithall he blew hys horne. Than there com one armed on horsebacke and dressed hys shyld and com fast towarde sir Torre. And than he dressed hym ayenste hem and so ran togydirs, and sir Torre bare hym from hys horse, and anone the knyght yelded hym to hys mercy. 'But, sir, I have a felow in yondir pavilyon that woll have ado with you anone.'

'He shall be wellcom,' seyde sir Torre.

Than was he ware of another knyght commynge with grete rawndom, and eche of hem dressed to other, that mervayle hit was to se. But the knyght smote sir Torre a grete stroke in myddys the shyld, that his spere all to-shyverde. And sir Torre smote hym thorow the shyld benethe, that hit wente thorow the coste of the knyght; but the stroke slew hym nat. And therewith sir Torre alyght and smote hym on the helme a grete stroke, and therewith the knyght yelded hym and besought hym of mercy.

'I woll well,' seyde sir Torre, 'but ye and youre felow muste go unto kynge Arthure and yelde you presoners unto hym.'

'By whom shall we say we ar thydir sente?'

'Ye shall sey, by the knyght that wente in the queste of the knyght with the brachette. Now, what be your two namys?' seyde sir Torre.

'My name ys,' seyde that one, 'sir Phelot of Langeduke.'

'And my name ys,' seyde the othir, 'sir Petipase of Wynchilsee.'

'Now go ye forthe,' seyde sir Torre, 'and God spede you and me.'

Than cam the dwarff and seyde unto sir Torre, 'I pray you gyff me my bone.'

2 C sperys 6 thys wey *not in C*
it 31 C Felot of Langduk
gyue me a yefte

19-20 C shelde by lowe of the sheld and
32-3 C Petypase of Wynchylse 37 C

'I woll well,' seyde sir Torre, 'aske and ye shall have.'

'I aske no more,' seyde the dwarff, 'but that ye woll suffir me to do you servyse, for I woll serve no more recreaunte knyghtes.'

5 'Well, take an horse,' seyde sir Torre, 'and ryde one with me.'

'For I wote,' seyde the dwarff, 'ye ryde afftir the knyght with the whight brachette, and I shall brynge you where he ys,' seyde the dwarff.

10 And so they rode thorowoute a foreste; and at the laste they were ware of two pavilions evyn by a pryory, 'with two sheldes', and that one shylde was enewed with whyght and that othir shylde was rede.

(10) Therewith sir Torre alyght and toke the dwarff hys
15 glayve, and so he com to the whyght pavilion. He saw three
40v damesels lye in hyt on a paylette slepyng; and so he wente
unto the tother pavylyon and founde a lady lyyng in hit
slepyng, but therein was the whyght brachett that bayed
at hym faste. And than sir Torre toke up the brachette and
20 wente hys way and toke hit to the dwarffe.

And with the noyse the lady com oute of the pavilion,
and all hir damesels, and seyde, 'Woll ye take my brachette
frome me?'

'Ye,' seyde sir Torre, 'this brachett have I sought frome
25 kyng Arthures courte hydir.'

'W[e]ll,' seyde the lady, 'sir knyght, ye shall nat go
farre with hir but that ye woll be mette with and greved.'

'I shall abyde what adventure that commyth by the grace
of God,' and so mownted uppon hys horse and passed on
30 hys way towarde Camelot.

But it was so nere nyght he myght nat passe but litill farther.

1 and ye shall have *not in C* 5 Well *not in C* 6-7 C me I wote ye ryde
11-12 C* with two sheldes and the one shylde F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 169b): A
chascun des pavillons pendoit uns escus 16 C lye in it and one paylett
17-18 C lyeng slepyng ther in But ther was the 18-19 C that bayed at
her† F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 169c): et li brakés saut jus del lit et commence a glatir
si fort pour chou que il ne connoissoit pas le chevalier 19-22 C fast and therwith
the lady yede oute of the pavelione & all her damoysels But anone as syr Tor
aspyed the whyte brachet he took her by force and took her to the dwerf what
wille ye so sayd the lady take my brachet 21 with the noyse *not in C*† F
(*loc. cit.*): Et la damoisele s'esveille erraument pour la noise que cil faisoit
24 W shought 27 farre *not in C*

'Know ye any lodgyng here nye?' seyde sir Torre.

'I know none,' seyde the dwarff, 'but here besydys ys an ermytage, and there ye muste take lodgyng as ye fynde.'

And within a whyle they com to the hermytage and toke 5
such lodgyng as was there, and as grasse and otis and brede
for their horsis. Sone hit was spedde, and full harde was
their souper. But there they rested them all nyght tyll
on the morne, and herde a masse devoutely and so toke
their leve of the ermyte. And so sir Torre prayde the 10
ermyte to pray for hym, and he seyde he wolde, and betoke
hym to God. And so mownted uppon horsebacke and rode
towardis Camelot a longe whyle.

So with that they herde a knyght calle lowde that com
afftir them, and seyde, 'Knyght, abyde and yelde my 15
brachette that thou toke frome my lady!' Sir Torre re-
turned agayne and behelde hym how he was a semely
knyght and well horsed and armed at all poyntes. Than
sir Torre dressed hys shyld and toke hys glayve in hys
hondys. And so they com fersely on as freysshe men and 20
droff both horse and man to the erthe. Anone they arose
lyghtly and drew hir swerdis as egirly as lyons, and put
their shyldis before them, and smote thorow their shyldys,
that the cantels felle on bothe partyes. Also they tamed
their helmys, that the hote bloode ran oute and the thycke 25
mayles of their hawbirkes they carff and rooffe in sundir,
that the hote bloode ran to the erthe. And bothe they had 41^r
many woundys and were passynge wery.

But sir Torre aspyed that the tothir knyght faynted, and
than he sewed faste uppon hym and doubled hys strokis 30
and stroke hym to the erthe on the one syde. Than sir
Torre bade hym yelde hym. 'That woll I nat,' seyde
Abelleus, 'whyte lastith the lyff and the soule in my body,
onles that thou wolte geff me the brachette.'

'That woll I nat,' seyde sir Torre, 'for hit was my queste 35
to brynge agayne the brachette, thee, other bothe.'

5 W they com they com 6 C* and was there gras 20-1 C and the
other cam fyersly vpon hym and smote hors & man to the erthe 31 C and
garte hym 33 C whyte my lyf lasteth and the soule is within my body
35 C not doo

(11) With that cam a damesell rydyng on a palferey as faste as she myght dryve, and cryed with lowde voice unto sir Torre.

'What woll ye with me?' seyde sir Torre.

5 'I beseche the,' seyde the damesell, 'for kynge Arthurs love, gyff me a gyffte, I requyre the, jantyll knyght, as thou arte a jantillman.'

'Now,' seyde sir Torre, 'aske a gyffte and I woll gyff hit you.'

10 'Grauntermercy,' seyde the damesell. 'Now I aske the hede of thys false knyght Abelleus, for he ys the moste outerageous knyght that lyvith, and the grettist murtherer.'

'I am lothe,' seyde sir Torre, 'of that gyffte I have gyvyn you; but lette hym make amendys in that he hathe tres-
15 pased agayne you.'

'Now,' seyde the damesell, 'I may nat, for he slew myne owne brothir before myne yghen that was a bettir knyght than he, and he had had grace; and I kneled halfe an owre before hym in the myre fo[r] to sauff my brothirs lyff that
20 had done hym no damage, but fought with hym by adventure of armys, and so for all that I coude do he strake of hys hede. Wherefore I requyre the, as thou arte a trew knyght, to gyff me my gyffte, othir ellis I shall shame the in all the courte of kynge Arthure; for he ys the falsyste
25 knyght lyvyng, and a grete destroyer of men, and namely of good knyghtes.'

So whan Abellyus herde thys, he was more aferde and yelded hym and asked mercy. 'I may nat now,' seyde sir Torre, 'but I sholde be founde false of my promyse, for ere-
30 whyle whan I wolde have tane you to mercy ye wolde none aske, but iff ye had the brachett agayne that was my queste.' And therewith he toke off hys helme, and therewith he
41^v arose and fledde, and sir Torre afftir hym, and smote of hys hede quyte.

35 'Now, sir,' seyde the damesell, 'hyt ys nere nyght. I pray you com and lodge with me hereby at my place.'

10 C gramercy

16 W I may nat I may nat C he may not† F (*Huth*

Merlin, f. 171d): Ja Dieus n'ait merci de m'arme se je en ai merci 25 of

men and namely *not* in C

29 ere *not* in C†

36 C with me here at my

place it is here fast by

'I woll well,' seyde sir Torre, 'for my horse and I have fared evyll syn we departed frome Camelot.'

And so he rode with her, and had passyng good chere with hir. And she had a passyng fayre olde knyght unto 5 hir husbunde that made hym good chere and well easyd both hys horse and hym. And on the morne [he] herde hys masse and brake hys faste, and toke hys leve of the knyght and of the lady that besought hym to telle hys name.

'Truly,' he seyde, 'my name ys sir Torre, that was late 10 made knyght, and thys was the firste queste of armys that ever y ded, to bryng agayne that thys knyght Abelleus toke away frome kynge Arthurs courte.'

'Now, fayre knyght,' seyde the lorde and the lady, 'and ye com here in oure marchys, se here youre poore lodgyng, 15 and hit shall be allwayes at youre commaundement.'

So sir Torre departed and com to Camelot on the third day by noone. And the kynge and the quene and all the courte was passyng fayne of hys commynge, and made grete joy that he was com agayne, for he wente frome the 20 courte with litill succour but as kynge Pellynor, hys fadir, gaff hym an olde courser, and kynge Arthur gaff hym armour and swerde; othir ellis had he none other succour, but rode so forthe hymself alone. And than the kynge and the quene by Merlions advice made hym swere to telle of hys adven- 25 tures, and so he tolde and made prevys of hys dedys as hit ys before reherced, wherefore the kynge and the quene made grete joy.

'Nay, nay,' seyde Merlion, 'thys ys but japis that he hath do, for he shall preve a noble knyght of proues as few 30 lyvyng, and jantyl and curteyse and of good tacchys, and passyng trew of hys promyse, and never shall he outrage.' Wherethorow Merlions wordis kynge Arthure gaff an erledom of londis that felle unto hym. AND HERE ENDITH THE QUESTE OF SIR TORRE, KYNGE PELLYNORS SONNE.

Than kynge Pellynore armed hym and mownted uppon 35 (12) 42^r hys horse, and rode more than a pace after the lady that the

1 C his hors and he had 2 C syn they departed 6 C his hors and he 13 C
O fayr knyght said the lady and her husband 14 C come and see oure poure
lodgyng 27 S made hym grete ioye 28-9 C* Iapes to that he shalle doo
31 he *not in C*

knyght lad away. And as he rode in a foreyste he saw in a valey a damesell sitte by a well and a wounded knyght in her armys, and kynge Pellynor salewed hir. And whan she was ware of hym, she cryed on lowde and seyde, 'Helpe
 5 me, knyght, for Jesuys sake!' But kynge Pellynore wolde nat tarry, he was so egir in hys queste; and ever she cryed an hondred tymes aftir helpe. Whan she saw he wolde nat abyde, she prayde unto God to sende hym as much nede of helpe as she had, and that he myght feele hit or he deyed.
 10 So, as the booke tellith, the knyght there dyed that was wounded, wherefore for pure sorow the lady slew hirselff with hys swerde.

As kynge Pellynore rode in that valey he mette with a poore man, a laborer, (and) seyde, 'Sawyst thou any knyght
 15 rydyng theys way ledyng a lady?'

'Ye, sir,' seyde the man, 'I saw that knyght and the lady that made grete dole. And yondir beneth in a valey there shall ye se two pavilions, and one of the knyghtes of the pavilions chalenged that lady of that knyght, and seyde she
 20 was hys cosyne nere, wherefore he shold lede hir [no] farther. And so they waged batayle in that quarell; that one seyde he wolde have hir by force, and that other seyde he wold have the rule of her, for he was hir kynnesman and wolde lede hir to hir kynne.' So for thys quarell he leffte hem fyghtyng.
 25 'And if ye woll ryde a pace ye shall fynde them fyghtyng, and the lady was leffte with two squyers in the pavelons.'

'God thanke the,' seyde kynge Pellynor.

Than he rode a walop tylle he had a syght of the two pavilons, and the two knyghtys fyghtyng. And anone he
 30 rode unto the pavilions and saw the lady how she was there, for she was hys queste, and seyde, 'Fayre lady, ye muste go with me unto the courte of kynge Arthure.'

'Sir knyght,' seyde the two squyres, 'yondir ar two knyghtes that fyght for thys lady. Go ye thyder and departe
 35 them, and be ye agreed with them, and than may ye have hir at youre plesure.'

5-6 *C* for crystes sake kynge Pellinore & he wold not 14 *C* labourer Sawest
 thow not saide Pellinore a knyghte *W* a laborer which seyde etc. *The only way*
to account for this reading is to assume that which was W's rendering of that
which in its turn was a misreading of a contracted and 15 *C* ledyng awaye
 20 *W* ne farther 23 *C* by cause he was 30-1 *C* the lady that was his quest

'Ye sey well,' seyde kynge Pellynor.

And anone he rode betwixte hem and departed them, and asked them their causis why they fought. 42^v

'Sir knyght,' seyde that one, 'I shall telle you. Thys lady ys my kynneswoman nye, my awntis doughtir, and whan 5 I herde hir complayne that she was with hym magré hir hede, I waged batayle to fyght with hym.'

'Sir knyght,' seyde thys othir whos name was Outelake of Wentelonde, 'and thys lady I gate be my prouesse of hondis and armys thys day at Arthurs courte.' 10

'That ys nat trew,' seyde kynge Pellynor, 'for ye com in suddeynly thereas we were at the hyghe feste and toke away thys lady or ony man myght make hym redy, and therefore hit was my queste to brynge her agayne and you bothe, othir ellis that one of us to leve in the fylde. Therefore 15 thys lady shall go with me, othir I shall dye therefore, for so have I promysed kynge Arthur. And therefore fyght ye no more, for none of you shall have parte of hir at thys tyme. And if ye lyst for to fyght for hir with me, I woll defende hir.' 20

'Well,' seyde the knyghtes, 'make you redy, and we shall assaile you with all oure power.'

And as kynge Pellynor wolde have put hys horse frome hym, sir Outelake roff hys horse thorow with a swerde, and seyde, 'Now art thou afoote as well as we ar.' Whan kynge 25 Pellynore aspyed that hys horse was 'slayne', lyghtly he lepe frome hys horse, and pulled oute hys swerde, and put hys shyld afore hym and seyde, 'Knyght, kepe the well, for thou shalt have a buffette for the sleynge of my horse.' So kynge Pellynor gaff hym such a stroke uppon the helme 30 that he clave the hede downe to the chyne, and felle downe to the erthe dede.

Than he turned hym to the other knyght that was sore (13) wounded. But whan he saw that buffette he wolde nat fyght, but kneled downe and seyde, 'Take my cosyn, 35 thys lady, with you, as ys youre queste, and I require

8-9 *C* Hontzlake of wentland 10 hondis and *not in C* 11 *C* that is vntruly said
 15 *C* to abyde in the 19-20 *C* her fyzte with me and I wille defende her
 26 *W* horse was *C* hors was slayne *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 175a): li uns laisse aler l'espee et fiert le cheval en costé seniestre, si l'ochist et li cheuaus chiet mors
 34 *C* sawe the others buffet 36 *C* yow at youre request

you, as ye be a trew knyght, put hir to no shame nother vylony.'

'What?' seyde kynge Pellynore, 'woll ye nat fyght for hir?'

'No,' seyde the knyght, 'I woll nat fyght with such a
5 knyght of proues as ye be.'

'Well,' seyde kynge Pellynore, 'I promyse you she shall have no vyllany by me, as I am trew knyght.'

'But now me wantis an horse,' seyde kynge Pellynor, 'but I woll have Outelakis horse.'

10 'Sir, ye shall nat nede,' seyde the knyght, 'for I shall gyff you such an horse as shall please you, so that ye woll lodge with me, for hit ys nere nyght.'

'I woll well,' seyde kynge Pellynore, 'abyde with you all nyght.'

And there he had with hym ryght good chere and fared of the beste with passyng good wyne, and had myry reste that nyght.

And on the morne he harde masse, and dyned. And so was brought hym a fayre bay courser, and kynge Pellynors
20 sadyll sette uppon hym.

'Now, what shall I calle you,' seyde the knyght, 'inasmuch as ye have my cousyn at youre desyre of youre queste?'

'Sir, I shall telle you: my name ys kynge Pellynor, kynge of the Ilis, and knyght of the Table Rounde.'

25 'Now am I glad,' seyde the knyght, 'that such a noble man sholde have the rule of my cousyn.'

'Now, what ys youre name?' seyde kynge Pellynor. 'I pray you telle me.'

30 'Sir, my name ys sir Meliot de Logurs, and thys lady, my cosyn, hir name ys called 'Nyneve'. And thys knyght that was in the other pavilion was my sworne brother, a passyng good knyght, and hys name ys Bryan of the Ilis, and he ys full lothe to do ony wronge or to fyght with ony man but if he be sore sought on.'

35 'Hit ys mervayle,' seyde kynge Pellynor, 'he wolde nat have ado with me.'

6 *C* Pellenore ye say wel 8 *C* me lacketh 30 *W* Nyneve *C* cosyn hyght
Nimue (*In a later passage, p. 125, l. 5, C gives the spelling Nyneue which is nearest*
to the French Nivienne, Nivene) 33 *C* ful loth to do wronge and ful lothe
to fyghte with 34 *C** sought on so that for shame he may not leue it

'Sir, he woll nat have ado with no man but if hit be at hys requeste.'

'I pray you brynge hym to the courte one of thes dayes,' seyde kynge Pellynor.

'Sir, we woll com togydirs.'

'Ye shall be wellcom,' seyde kynge Pellynore, 'to the courte of kynge Arthure, and ye shall be gretely alowed for youre commynge.'

And so he departed with the lady and brought her to Camelot.

But so as they rode in a valey, hit was full of stonys, and there the ladyes horse stumbled and threw her downe, and hir arme was sore brused, that nerehonde she swooned for payne.

'Alas!' seyde the lady, 'myn arme ys oute of lythe, wherethorow I muste nedys reste me.'

'Ye shall well,' seyde kynge Pellynor.

And so he alyght undir a tre where was fayre grasse, and he put hys horse thereto, and so rested hem undir the tree and slepte tylle hit was ny nyght. And when he awoke he wolde have rydden forthe, but the lady seyde, 'Ye may as well ryde backwarde as forewarde, hit ys so durke.' So they abode styлле and made there theire lodgyng. Than kynge Pellynor put of hys armoure.

Tha[n] so a litill tofore mydnyght they herde the trottyng of an horse. 'Be ye styлле,' seyde kynge Pellynor, 'for we shall hyre of som adventure.'

And therewith he armed hym. So ryght evyn before hym there mette two knyghtes, that one com frowarde Camelot, and that othir com from the Northe, and eyther salewed other and asked:

'What tydynges at Camelot?' seyde that one knyght.

'Be my hede,' seyde the other, 'there have I bene and aspied the courte of kynge Arthure, and there ys such a felyshyp that they may never be brokyn, and well-nyghe all

3 I pray you *not in C* 7 *C* and gretely allowed 18 *C* a fayr tree 19 *C*
so leyd hym 21 *C* ryden Sir said the lady 25 *W* that so a litill *C** theñe
a lytel 31 and asked *not in C* 32-3 *W* seyde that one knyght Be my
hede there *C** sayd the one by my hede saide the other ther *F* (*Huth Merlin*,
f. 176b): 'Qués nouvelles aportés vous?' 'Je n'aporch, fait il, nules nouvelles qui
me plaisent'

the world holdith with Arthure, for there ys the floure of chevalry. And now for thys cause am I rydyng into the Northe: to telle oure chyfftaynes of the felyship that ys with-holdyn with kynge Arthure.'

5 'As for that,' seyde the othir knyght, 'I have brought a remedy with me that ys the grettist poysen that ever ye herde speke off. And to Camelot woll I with hit, for we have a frende ryght nyghe the kynge, well cheryshed, that shall poysen kynge Arthur, for so hath he promysed oure
10 chyfftaynes, and receyved grete gyfftis for to do hit.'

'Beware,' seyde the othir knyght, 'of Merlion, for he knowith all thynges by the devylles craftte.'

'As for that, woll I nat lett,' seyde the knyght; and so they departed in sondir.

15 And anone aftir that kynge Pellynor made hym redy, and hys lady, and rode towarde Camelot. And as they com by the welle thereas the wounded knyght was and the lady, there he founde the knyght and the lady etyn with lyons othir with wylde bestis, all save the hede, wherefore he made
20 grete sorow and wepte passynge sore, and seyde, 'Alas! hir lyff myght I have saved, but I was ferse in my queste that I wolde nat abyde.'

'Wherefore make ye such doole?' seyde the lady.

'I wote nat,' seyde kynge Pellinore, 'but my herte rwyth
25 sore of the deth of hir that lyeth yondir, for she was a passyng fayre lady, and a yonge.'

'Now, woll [ye] do by myne advise? Take the knyght and lette hym be buryed in an ermytage, and than take the ladies hede and bere hit with you unto kynge Arthure.' So kynge
30 Pellynor toke thys dede knyght on hys shyld and brought hym to the ermytage, and charged the heremyte with the corse, that servyse sholde be done for the soule.

'And take ye hys harneyse for youre payne.'

'Hit shall be done,' seyde the hermyte, 'as I woll answere
35 to God.'

44^r And therewith they departed and com thereas the lady lay with a fayre yalow here. That greved kynge Pellynor

13 *C* therefore wille I not lete it 16 *S* lady rode 24 *C* herte morneth 25 that
lyeth yondir *not in C* 27 *C* aduys said the lady take 30 *C* on his sholders
F devant soi 36-7 *C** the hede of the lady lay

passynge sore whan he loked on hit, for much hys herte caste unto that vysage. And so by noone they come unto Camelot, and the kynge and the quene was passyng fayne of hys commynge to the courte. And there he was made to swere uppon the four Evangelistes to telle the trouthe of hys queste frome the one ende to that other.

'A, kynge Pellynor,' seyde quene Gwennyver, 'ye were gretly to blame that ye saved nat thys ladyes lyff.'

'Madam,' seyde kynge Pellynore, 'ye were gretely to blame and ye wolde nat save youre owne lyff and ye myght. But, salf youre displeure, I was so furyous in my queste that I wolde nat abyde, and that repentis me and shall do dayes of my lyff.'

'Truly ye ought sore to repente hit,' seyde Merlion, 'for that lady was youre owne doughtir, begotyn of the lady of the Rule, and that knyght that was dede was hir love and sholde have wedded hir, and he was a ryght good knyght of a yonge man, and wolde a proved a good man. An[d] to this courte was he commynge, and hys name was sir Myles of the Laundis, and a knyght com behynde hym and slew hym with a spere, and hys name was Lorayne le Saveage, a false knyght and a cowherde. And she for grete sorow and dole slew hirselff with his swerde, and hyr name was Alyne. And because ye wolde nat abyde and helpe hir, ye shall se youre beste frende fayle you whan ye be in the grettist distresse that ever ye were othir shall be. And that penaunce God hath ordayned you for that dede, that he that ye sholde truste moste on of ony man on lyve, he shall leve you there ye shall be slayne.'

'Me forthynkith hit,' seyde kynge Pellynor, 'that thus shall me betyde, but God may well fordo desteny.'

Thus whan the queste was done of the whyght herte the whych folowed sir Gawayne, and the queste of the brachet whych folowed sir Torre, kynge Pellynors son, and the queste of the lady that the knyghte toke away, whych at that tyme folowed kynge Pellynor, than the kynge stablysshed all the knyghtes and gaff them rychesse and londys;

6 *ende not in C†* 11 *C* sauf your pleasir 23 *C* Eleyne 28 *C* most truste
to 30 hit *not in C* 30-1 *C* that this shalle 31 *C* fordoo wel 33-4 *C*
brachet folowed of syr Tor Pellenors sone 37 *C* all his knyghtes

44^v and charged them never to do outrage nothir morthir, and
 allwayes to fle treson, and to gyff mercy unto hym that
 askith mercy, uppon payne of forfiture [of their] worship and
 lordship of kyng Arthure for evirmore; and allwayes to
 5 do ladyes, damesels, and jantilwomen and wydowes [socour:]
 strengthe hem in hir ryghtes, and never to enforce them
 uppon payne of dethe. Also that no man take no batayles in
 a wrongefull quarell for no love ne for no worldis goodis.
 So unto thys were all knyghtis sworne of the Table Rounde
 10 both olde and yonge. And every yere so were the[y] sworne
 at the hygh feste of Pentecoste.

EXPLICIT THE WEDDYNG OF KYNG ARTHUR.

1 *C* doo outragyoussyte 2 *C* treason Also by no meane to be cruel but to gyue
 mercy 3 *W* othir worship 5-7 *C* gentylwymmen socour* vpon payne of dethe
 (and wydowes. . . enforce them *omitted*†) 8 *C* for no lawe ne for noo worldes

IV
THE DEATH OF MERLIN
AND
THE WAR WITH THE FIVE KINGS

[*Winchester MS.*, ff. 45^r–49^r;
Caxton, Book IV, chs. 1–5]

CAXTON'S RUBRICS

- Ch. 1. How Merlyn was assotted and dooted on one of the ladyes
of the Lake, and how he was shytted in a roche under a stone
and there deyed.
- „ 2. How fyve kynges came into this londe to warre ayenst
kyng Arthur and what counceyl Arthur had ayenst them.
- „ 3. How kyng Arthur had adoo with them and overthrewe
them and slewe the fyve kynges and made the remenaunte
to flee.
- „ 4. How the batayl was fynysshed or he came, and how the
kyng founded an abbay where the batayl was.
- „ 5. How syr Tor was made knyght of the Rounde Table, and
how Bagdemagus† was dyspleased.

† S Badgemagus

SO aftir thes questis of syr Gawayne, syr Tor, and kynge 45^r (1)
 Pellynore, than hit befelle that Merlyon felle in dotage
 on the damesell that kynge Pellynore brought to courte;
 and she was one of the damesels of the Lady of the Laake,
 that hyght 'Nyneve'. But Merlion wolde nat lette her have 5
 no reste, but allwayes he wolde be wyth her. And ever she
 made Merlion good chere tyll she had lerned of hym
 all maner of thynges that sche desyred; and he was assoted
 uppon hir, that he myght nat be from hir.

So on a tyme he tolde to kynge Arthure that he scholde 10
 nat endure longe, but for all his craftes he scholde be putte
 into the erthe quyk. And so he tolde the kyng many thyngis
 that scholde befall, but allwayes he warned the kyng to
 kepe well his swerde and the scawberde, 'for he told hym
 how the swerde and the scawberde' scholde be stolyn by 15
 a woman frome hym that he moste trusted. Also he tolde
 kyng Arthure that he scholde mysse hym.

'And yett had ye levir than all youre londis have me
 agayne.'

'A,' sayde the kyng, 'syn ye knowe of youre evil adven- 20
 ture, purvey for hit, and putt hit away by youre crauftes,
 that mysseadventure.'

'Nay,' seyde Merlion, 'hit woll not be.'

He departed frome the kyng, and within a whyle the
 damesell of the Lake departed, and Merlyon went with 25
 her evermore wheresomever she yeode. And oftyntymes
 Merlion wolde have had hir prevayly away by his subtile
 crauftes. Than she made hym to swere that he sholde
 never do none inchauntemente uppon hir if he wolde have
 his wil, and so he swore. Than she and Merlyon wente 30
 over the see unto the londe of Benwyke thereas kyng Ban
 was kyng, that had grete warre ayenste kyng Claudas.

And there Merlion spake with kyng Bayans wyff, a
 fayre lady and a good; hir name was Elayne. And there he

3 S to the Courte 4 C one of the damoyseles of the lake 5 W Nenyve
 C Nyneue F (*Huth Merlin*, ff. 182a and 183c): Nivienne, Nivene 8 C maner
 thynges 11 C dure long 14-15 C* scaubard for he told hym how the swerd
 and the scaubard shold be stolen F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 188b): sa boine espee od
 tout le fuerre 26 C she wente 33 C kynge Bans

sawe yonge Launcelot. And there the queene made grete sorowe for the mortal werre that kyng Claudas made on hir lo^rn^ldis.

- 45^v 'Take none hevynesse,' seyde Merlyon, 'for this same
 5 chylde yonge Launcelot shall within this twenty yere
 revenge you on kyng Claudas, that all Crystendom shall
 speke of hit; and this same chylde shall be the moste man
 of worship of the worlde. And his fyrst name ys Galahad,
 that know I well,' seyde Merlyon, 'and syn ye have con-
 10 fermed hym Launcelot.'

'That is trouth,' seyde the quene, 'his name was fyrst Galahad. A, Merlyon,' seyde the quene, 'shall I lyve to se my son suche a man of prouesse?'

- 'Yee, hardely, lady, on my perelle ye shall se hit, and lyve
 15 many wyntirs afir.'

Than sone afir the lady and Merlyon departed. And by weyes he shewed hir many wondyrs, and so come into Cornuayle. And allwayes he lay aboute to have hir maydynhode, and she was ever passynge wery of hym and wolde
 20 have bene delyverde of hym, for she was aferde of hym for cause he was a devyls son, and she cowde not be skyfte of hym by no meane. And so one a tyme Merlyon ded shew hir in a roche whereas was a grete wondir and wrought by enchauntement that went undir a grete stone. So by hir
 25 subtile worchyng she made Merlyon to go undir that stone to latte hir wete of the mervayles there, but she wrought so there for hym that he come never oute for all the craufte he coude do, and so she departed and leffte Merlyon.

- (2) And as king Arthure rode to Camelot and helde there
 30 a grete feste with myrth and joy, and sone afir he returned unto Cardolle. And there come unto Arthure newe tydynges that the kyng of Denmarke and the kyng of Irelande, that was his brothir, and the kyng of the Vale and the kynge of Sorleyse and the kyng of the Ile of Longtayne, all these
 35 fyve kynges with a grete oste was entirde into the londis of kyng Arthure and brent and slewe and distroyed clene byfore hem bothe the citeis and castels, that hit was pité

2-3 *W* on hir lordis *C** on her landes 5 yonge Launcelot *not in C* 14 hardely
not in C 18 *C* always Merlyn lay aboute the lady to haue her 21-2 *C* beskyfte
 hym *W* of of hym 31 *C* Cardoylle 35 *C* the lād 36 and distroyed *not in C*

to here. 'Alas!' seyde Arthure, 'yet had I never reste one 46^r
monethe syne I was kyng crowned of this londe. Now
shall I never reste tylle I mete with tho kyngis in a fayre
felde, that I make myne avow; for my trwe lyege peple shall
not be destroyed in my defaughte. Therefore go with me 5
who so woll, and abyde who that wyll.'

Than kyng Arthure lette wryte unto kyng Pellynor and
prayde hym in all haste to make hym redy 'with suche peple
as we myght lyghtlyeste arere,' and to hyghe hym aftir in
haste. Than all the barownes were wrothe prevayly that 10
the kynge wolde departe so suddaynly; but the kynge by
no meane wolde abyde, but made wrytyng unto them that
were nat ther and bade hyghe them aftir hym suche as
were nat at that tyme at that courte. Than the kynge come
to quene Gwenyver and seyde unto her, 'Madame, make 15
you redy, for ye shall go with me, for I may nat longe mysse
you. Ye shall cause me to be the more hardy, what advent-
ture so befallle me; yette woll I nat wyghte my lady to be in
no joupardye.'

'Sir,' she seyde, 'I am at youre commaundement, and shall 20
be redy at all tymes.'

So on the morne the kyng and the quene departed with
suche felyship as they had and come into the North, into
a forereste besyde Humbir, and there lodged hem. So whan
this worde come unto the fyve kynges abovynseyde that 25
Arthure was besyde Humbir in a foreste, so there was a
knyght, brothir unto one of the fyve kynges, that gaff hem
suche counseyle: 'Ye knowe well that sir Arthur hath
the floure of chevalry of the worlde with hym, and hit
preved by the grete batayle he did with the eleven kynges. 30
And therefore hyghe ye unto hym nyght and day tyll that
we be nyghe hym, for the lenger he taryeth the bygger
he is, and we ever the weyker. And he is so corageous of 46^r
hymself tha^t he is com to the felde with lytyll peple, and
therefore lette us sette uppon hym or day, and we shall sle 35
downe of his knyghtes that none shall helpe other of them.'

Soo unto this counseyle these five kynges assented, and (3)

5 Therefore *not in C* 9 *C* rere 14 *C* in the Courte 15 *C* sayd lady
make 21 *C** redy what tyme so ye be redy 25 *C* the word & tydynge came
29 *C* as it is 36 *C* of his knyghtes ther shal none escape

so they passed forth with hir oste thorow North Walys and come uppon Arthure be nyght and sette uppon his oste as the kynge and his knyghtes were in theire pavylyons. So kynge Arthure was unarmed and leyde hym to reste with
 5 his quene Gwenyvere.

'Sir,' seyde sir Kayus, 'hit is nat beste we be unarmed.'

'We shall have no nede,' seyde sir Gawayne and sir Gryflet that lay in a lytyll pavylyon by the kynge.

So with that they harde a grete noyse and many cryed
 10 'Treson!'

'Alas!' seyde Arthure, 'we be betrayed! Unto armys, felowys!' than he cryed. So they were armed anone at all poyntes.

Than come there a wounded knyght unto the kynge and
 15 seyde, 'Sir, save youreself and my lady the quene, for oure oste is destroyed, and slayne is much of our people.'

So anone the kynge and the quene and the three knyghtes toke hir horses and rode toward Humbir to passe over hit, and the water was so rowgh that they were aferde to passe
 20 over hit.

'Now may ye chose,' seyde kynge Arthure, 'whethir ye woll abyde and take the adventure on this syde, for and ye be takyn they wol sle you.'

'Yet were me lever to dey in this watir than to falle in
 25 youre enemyes handis,' seyde the quene, 'and there to be slayne.'

And as they stode talkyng sir Kayus saw the fyve kynges
 47^r commynge on horsebak by hemself alone, wyth hir sperys in hir hondis, evyn towarde hem.

30 'Lo,' seyde sir Kayus, 'yondir be tho fyve kynges. Lette us go to them and macche hem.'

'That were foly,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'for we ar but four, and they be fyve.'

'That is trouth,' seyde sir Gryfflette.

35 'No force,' seyd sir Kayus. 'I woll undirtake for two of the beste of hem, and than may ye three undirtake for all the othir three.'

And therewithall sir Kay lette his horse renne as faste

6 C kaynus C it is not good
 queue (S quene) to dye

10 C treson treson
 25 C handes & there be

24 C It were me leuer sayd the
 32 C we are but thret

as he myght to encountir with one of them, and strake one of the kynges thorow the shelde and also the body a fadom, that the kyng felle to the erthe starke dede. That sawe sir Gawayne and ran unto anothir kyng so harde that he smote hym downe and thorow the body with a spere, that he felle 5 to the erthe dede. Than sir Gryfflet ran to the fourth kyng and gaff hym suche a falle that his necke brake in sondir. Anone sir Arthure ran to anothir and smote hym thorow the body with a spere, that he fell to the erthe dede. Than sir Kay ran unto the fyfth kyng and smote hym so harde 10 on the helme that the stroke clave the helme and hede to the erthe.

'That was well stryken,' seyde kyng Arthure, 'and worshipfully haste thou holde thy promyse; therefore I shall honoure the whyle that I lyve.' 15

And therewithall they sette the quene in a barge into Humbir. But allwayes quene Gwinyvere prayed sir Kay for his dedis and seyde, 'What lady that ye love and she love you nat agayne, she were gretly to blame. And amonge all ladies,' seyde the quene, 'I shall bere your noble fame, 20 for ye spake a grete worde and fulfylled hit worshipfully.' And therewith the quene departed.

Than the kyng and the three knyghtes rode into the fore[s]te, for there they supposed to here of them that were ascapid, and there founde the moste party of his peple, and 25 47^r tolde hem how the fyve kynges were dede.

'And therefore lette us holde us togedyrs tyll hit be day, and whan hir oste have aspyed that their chyfteynes be slayne they woll make such dole that they shall nat helpe himself.'

And ryght as the kyng seyde, so hit was, for whan they 30 founde the fyve kynges dede they made such dole that they felle downe of there horsis. And therewithall com in kyng

1-2 C myghte and strake one of them thorow 5 downe and *not in C* 5-6 with a spere that he felle to the erthe dede *not in C* 7 in sondir *not in C* 6-8 In C Arthur comes before Gryfflet, and as in both texts Gryfflet attacks the fourth king, C is right in giving him the fourth place. This does not necessarily mean that W is at fault. The order of battles in W is the same as in F, and W's fourth kyng may well be the result of M's misinterpretation of the words *refiert tout autretel l'un des rois* (Huth Merlin, f. 193a): 'un', represented in French manuscripts by four identical strokes, could easily have been mistaken by M for the figure *iiii* 24 W forete 25 W the moste party of the fyve kynges (the moste party is repeated from previous line) 29 C shalle not mowe helpe 32 C fell fro their

Arthur but with a few peple and slewe on the ryght honde and the lyfte honde, that well nye there ascaped no man, but all were slayne to the numbir of thirty thousand. And whan the batayle was all ended the kynge kneled downe and
 5 thanked God mekely. And than he sente for the quene. And anone she was com and made grete joy of the overcommynge of that batayle.

- (4) Therewithall come one to kynge Arthure and tolde hym that kynge Pellynore was within three myle with a grete oste.
 10 And [so he] seyde, 'Go unto hym and let hym undirstonde how we have spedde.' So within a whyle kyng Pellynore com with a grete oste and salewed the peple and the kynge, and there was grete joy on every syde. Than the kynge let serch how many peple he had slayne, and there was founde
 15 but lytyll paste two hondred men slayne and eyght knyghtes of the Table Rounde in their pavylyons.

Than the kynge lat rere and devyse, in the same place thereas the batayle was done and made, a fayre abbay, and endewed hit with grete lyvelode, and let calle hit the Abbay
 20 of La Beale Adventure. But whan som of them come into there contrayes thereas the fyve kynges were kynges, and tolde hem how they were slayne, there was made grete dole. And all the kynge Arthurs enemyes, as the kynge of North Walis and the kynges of the Northe, knewe of this batayle;
 48^r 25 they were passynge hevye.

And so the kynge retourned unto Camelot in haste. And whan he was com to Camelot he called kyng Pellynore unto hym and seyde, 'Ye undirstonde well that we have loste eyght knyghtes of the beste of the Table Rounde, and
 30 by youre advyse we must chose eyght knyghtes of the beste we may fynde in this courte.'

'Sir,' seyde Pellynore, 'I shall counsayle you aftir my conceyte the beste wyse. There ar in youre courte full noble knyghtes bothe of olde and yonge. And be myne advyse ye
 35 shall chose half of the olde and half of the yonge.'

'Whych be the olde?' seyde kynge Arthure.

'Sir, mesemyth kynge Uryence that hath wedded youre sistir Morgan le Fay, and the kynge of the Lake, and sir

10 C* and he said 18 and made *not in C* 27 W Camelot and he C* Camelot
 he 30 C we wille chese viii ageyne of the best 34 C And therfor by

Hervyse de Revell, a noble knyght, and sir Galagars the fourthe.'

'This is well devysed,' seyde Arthure, 'and ryght so shall hit be. Now, whyche ar the four yonge knyghtes?'

'Sir, the fyrste is sir Gawayne, youre newew, that is as good a knyght of his tyme as is ony in this londe. And the secunde as mesemyth beste is sir Gryfflette le Fyse de Du, that is a good knyght and full desyrous in armys, and who may se hym lyve, he shall preve a good knyght. And the thirde as mesemyth ys well worthy to be one of the Table Rounde, sir Kay the Senesciall, for many tymes he hath done full worshipfully. And now at youre laste batayle he dud full honorably for to undirtake to sle two kynges.'

'Be my hede,' seyde Arthure, 'ye sey soth. He is beste worthy to be a knyght of [the] Rounde Table of ony that is rehersed yet, and he had done no more prouesse his lyve dayes.'

'Now,' seyde kynge Pellynore, 'chose you of two knyghtes that I shall reherce whyche is most worthy, of sir Bagdemagus and sir Tor, my son; but for because he is my son I may nat prayse hym, but ellys and he were nat my son I durste say that of his age there is nat in this londe a better knyght than he is, nother of bettir condycions, and loth to do ony wronge and loth to take ony wronge.'

'Be my hede,' seyde Arthure, 'he is a passyng good knight as ony ye spake of this day. That wote I well,' seyde the kynge, 'for I have sene hym proved; but he seyth but lytil, but he doth much more, for I know none in all this courte, and he were as well borne on his modir syde as he is on youre syde, that is lyke hym of prouesse and of myght. And therefore I woll have hym at this tyme and leve sir Bagdemagus tyll anothir tyme.'

So whan they were chosyn by the assent of the barouns, so were there founden in hir seges every knyghtes name that here ar rehersed. And so were they sette in hir seges, where of sir Bagdemagus was wondirly wrothe that sir Tor was

4 C knyghtes said Arthur 7 C† fyse the dene F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 195b): li flex Dou (*var.* Do) 18-20 C Pellenore I shalle putte to yow two knyghtes and ye shalle chese whiche is moost worthy that is Syr Bagdemagus 27 C seyth lytyll 33 C of alle the 36 W sir Bagdemagus tyll anothir tyme
The last three words are repeated from the sentence four lines above. The scribe was

avaunced afore hym. And therefore soddeynly he departed
 frome the courte and toke his squyre with hym and rode
 longe in a foreste tyll they come to a crosse, and there he
 alyght and seyde his prayers devoutely. The meanewhyle
 5 his squyre founde wretyn uppon the crosse that Bagdemagus
 sholde never retourne unto the courte agayne tyll he had
 wonne a knyght of the Table Rounde body for body.

'Loo,' seyde his squyer, 'here I fynde wrytyng of you;
 therefore I rede you, returne agayne to the courte.'

10 'That shall I never,' seyde Bagdemagus, 'tyll men speke
 of me ryght grete worship, and that I be worthy to be a
 kn[y]ght of the Rounde Table.'

And so he rode forth, and there by the way he founde a
 braunche of holy herbe that was the signe of the Sancgreall,
 15 and no knyght founde no suche tokyns but he were a good
 49^r lyver and a man of prouesse.

So as sir Bagdemagus rode to se many adventures, so
 hit happed hym to come to the roche thereas the Lady of
 the Lake had put Merlyon undir the stone, and there he
 20 herde hym make a grete dole; wherefore sir Bagdemagus
 wolde have holpyn him, and wente unto the grete stone, and
 hit was so hevy that an hondred men myght nat lyffte hit
 up. Whan Merlyon wyste that he was there, he bade hym
 leve his laboure, for all was in vayne: for he myght never be
 25 holpyn but by her that put hym there.

And so Bagdemagus departed and dud many adventures
 and preved aftir a full good knyght, and come ayen to the
 courte and was made knyght of the Rounde Table. So on
 the morne there befelle new tydyngis and many othir
 30 adventures.

*obviously about to repeat the whole of the intervening passage, but soon noticed his
 mistake.* 3 he not in C 7 C a knyghtes body of the round table 8 C lo syr

10 S Bagdemagus by men 14 C Sancgraill 16 and a man of prouesse not in C
 23 hym not in C 25 W by hir her 29 many not in C

V

ARTHUR AND ACCOLON

[*Winchester MS.*, ff. 49^r-58^r;
Caxton, Book IV, chs. 6-15]

CAXTON'S RUBRICS

- Ch. 6. How kyng Arthur, kyng Uryens, and syr Accolon of Gaule chaced an hert, and of theyr mervayllous adventure.
- „ 7. How Arthur took upon hym to fyght to be delyverd oute of pryson, and also for to delyver twenty knyghtes that were in pryson.
- „ 8. How Accolon fonde hymself by a welle, and he toke upon hym to doo bataylle ayenst Arthur.
- „ 9. Of the bataylle bytwene Arthur and Accolon.
- „ 10. How kyng Arthurs swerde that he faught wyth brake, and how he recoverd of Accolon his owne swerde Excalibur and overcame his enemye.
- „ 11. How Accolon confessyd the treason of Morgan le Fay, kyng Arthurs syster, and how she wold have doon slee hym.
- „ 12. How Arthur accorded the two brethern and delyverd the twenty knyghtes, and how syr Accolons deyed.
- „ 13. How Morgan wold have slayn syr Uryens hyr husbond, and how syr Ewayn hir sone saved hym.
- „ 14. How quene Morgan le Fay made grete sorowe for the deth of Accolon, and how she stale awaye the scawbard fro Arthur.
- „ 15. How Morgan le Fay saved a knyght that shold have be drowned, and how kyng Arthur retorned home ageyn.

THAN hit befelle that Arthure and many of his knyghtes 49^r (6)
 rode on huntynge into a grete foreste. And hit happed
 kynge Arthure and kynge Uryence and sir Accalon of
 Gawle folowed a grete harte; for they three were well horsed,
 and so they chaced so faste that within a whyle they three 5
 were more than ten myle from her felyshep. And at the
 laste they chaced so sore that they slewe hir horsis undir-
 nethe them, and the horses were so fre that they felle downe
 dede. Than were all three on foote and ever they saw the
 harte before them passynge wery and inboced. 10

'What shall we do?' seyde kynge Arthure, 'we ar harde
 bestadde.'

'Lette us go on foote,' seyde kynge Uryence, 'tyll we may
 mete with somme lodgyng.' Than were they ware of the
 harte that lay on a grete watir banke, and a brachette bytyng 15
 on his throte; and mo othir houndis come aftir. Than
 kynge Arthure blewe the pryce and dyght the harte.

Than the kynge loked aboute the worlde and sawe before 49^v
 hym in a grete water a lytyll shippe all apparayled with sylke
 downe to the watir. And the shippe cam ryght unto them 20
 and landed on the sandis. Than Arthure wente to the banke
 and loked in and saw none erthely creature therein. 'Sirs,'
 seyde the kynge, 'com thens and let us se what is in this
 shippe.' So at the laste they wente into the shippe all three,
 and founde hit rychely behanged with cloth of sylke. 25

So by that tyme hit was durke nyght, there suddeynly
 was aboute them an hondred torchis sette uppon all the
 shyppe-bordis, and hit gaff grete lyght. And therewithall
 there come twelve fayre damesels and salued kynge Arthure
 on hir kneis, and called hym be his name and seyde he was 30
 ryght wellcom, and suche chere as they had he sholde have
 of the beste. Than the kynge thanked hem fayre. There-
 wythall they ledde the kynge and his felawys into a fayre

3-4 C Accolon of Gaulle F (*Huth Merlin*, f. 197b): Accalon 6 C were
 thenne x myle ffrom F (*ibid.*, f. 197c): il ot plus alé de dis liues englesques
 8-9 and the horses were so fre (*sore*?) that they felle downe dede *not in C* 10-11
 C wery and enbusshed What wille 18 loked aboute the worlde is a mis-
 translation of regarde contre mont la riviere etc. (*Huth Merlin*, f. 198a) 24 at
 the laste *not in C* C wente in al thre 25-6 C sylke By thenne it was
 27-8 C* alle the sydes of the shyp bordes

chambir, and there was a clothe leyde richely beseyne of all that longed to a table, and there were they served of all wyne and metys that they coude thynke of. But of that the kyng had grete mervayle, for he never fared bettir in his lyff as
5 for one souper.

And so whan they had souped at her leyser kyng Arthure was lad into a chambir, a rycher besene chambir sawe he never none; and so was kyng Uryence se[r]ved and lad into such anothir chambir; and sir Accolon was lad into the
10 thirde chambir passyng rychely and well besayne. And so were they leyde in their beddis easily, and anone they felle on slepe and slepte merveylously sore all the nyght.

And on the morne kyng Uryence was in Camelot abedde in his wyves armys, Morgan le Fay. And whan he woke he
50^r 15 had grete mervayle how he com there, for on the evyn before he was two dayes journey frome Camelot.

And whan kyng Arthure awoke he founde hymself in a durke preson, heryng aboute hym many complayntes of wofull knyghtes.

(7) 20 'What ar ye that so complayne?' seyde kyng Arthure.

'We bene here twenty knyghtes presoners, and som of us hath layne here eyght yere, and som more and somme lesse.'

'For what cause?' seyde Arthure.

'We shall tell you,' seyde the knyghtes.

25 'This lorde of this castell his name is sir Damas, and he is the falsyst knyght that lyvyth, and full of treson, and a very cowarde as [ony] lyvyth. And he hath a yonger brothir, a good knyght of prouesse, and his name is sir Oughtlake. And this traytoure Damas, the elder brother, woll geff hym
30 no parte of his londis but as sir Outlake kepyth thorow prouesse of his hondis. And so he kepith frome hym a full fayre maner and a rych, and therein sir Outlake dwellyth worshipfully and is well beloved with all peple. And this sir Damas oure mayster is a evyll beloved, for he is withoute
35 mercy, and he is a cowarde, and grete warre hath bene betwyxte them. But Outlake hath ever the bettir, and ever

3 C thynke of that the kyng
sayd they

28 C† Ontlake

34 C is as euyl

22 C seuen yere

30 C noo parte of his lyuelode

36 C them bothe

8 W seued C* serued

27 W as lyvyth

21 C prysoners

C* as ony lyueth

33 C biloued of al peple

he proferyth sir Damas to fyght for the lyvelode, body for body, but he woll nat of hit, other ellys to fynde a knyght to fyght for hym. Unto that sir Damas hath grauntid to fynde a knyght, but he is so evyll beloved and hated that there is no knyght woll fyght for hym.

'And whan Damas saw this, that there was never a knyght wolde fyght for hym, he hath dayly layne a wayte wyth many a knyght with hym and takyn all the knyghtes in this countray to se and aspye hir adventures: he hath takyn hem by force and brought hem to his preson. And so toke he us severally, as we rode on oure adventures, and many good knyghtes hath deyde in this preson for hunger, to the numbir of eyghtene knyghtes. And yf ony of us all that here is or hath bene wolde have foughtyn with his brother Outlake he wolde have delyverde us; but for because this Damas ys so false and so full of treson we wolde never fyght for hym to dye for hit, and we be so megir for hungir that unnethe we may stonde on oure fete.'

'God delyver you for his grete mercy!'

Anone withall come a damesel unto Arthure and asked hym, 'What chere?'

'I cannot say,' seyde Arthure.

'Sir,' seyde she, 'and ye woll fyght for my lorde ye shall be delyverde oute of preson, and ellys ye ascape never with the lyff.'

'Now,' seyde Arthure, 'that is harde. Yet had I lever fyght with a knyght than to dey in preson. Wyth this,' seyde Arthure, 'I may be delyverde and all thes presoners, I woll do the batayle.'

'Yes,' seyde the damesell.

'Than I am redy,' seyde Arthure, 'and I had horse and armoure.'

'Ye shall lak none,' seyde the damesell.

'Mesemethe, damesell, I shold have sene you in the courte of Arthure.'

'Nay,' seyde the damesell, 'I cam never there. I am the lordis doughter of this castell.'

2 C wylle not doo other 6 C there nys neuer 8 C many knyghtes 11 C
seueratly 17 C soo lene for 19 C his mercy sayd Arthure 22 C sayd he
24 with *not in C*

Yet was she false, for she was one of the damesels of Morgan le Fay.

- Anone she wente unto sir Damas and tolde hym how he wolde do batayle for hym, and so he sente for Arthure. And
 5 whan he com he was well coloured and well made of his lymmes, that all knyghtes that sawe hym seyde hit were pité that suche a knyght sholde dey in preson. So sir Damas and he were agreed that he sholde fyght for hym uppon this covenante, that all the othir knyghtes sholde be delyverde.
 10 And unto that was sir Damas sworne unto Arthur and also he to do the batayle to the uttermoste. And with that all the
 51^r twenty knyghtes were brought oute of the durke preson into the halle, and (he) delyverde hem, and so they all abode to se the batayle.
- (8) 15 Now turne we unto Accalon of Gaule, that whan he awoke he founde hymself by a depe welles syde within half a foote, in grete perell of deth. And there com oute of that fountayne a pype of sylver, and oute of that pype ran water all on hyghe in a stone of marbil. Whan sir Accolon sawe this he blyssed
 20 hym and seyde, 'Jesu, save my lorde kynge Arthure and kynge Uryence, for thes damysels in this shippe hath betrayed us. They were fendis and no women. And if I may ascape this mysadventure I shall distroye them, all that I may fynde of thes false damysels that faryth thus with
 25 theire inchauntementes.'

And ryght with that there com a dwarf with a grete mowthe and a flatte nose, and salewed sir Accalon and tolde hym how he cam fromme quene Morgan le Fay. 'And she gretys yow well and byddyth you be of stronge herte, for
 30 ye shall fyght to-morne wyth a knyght at the houre of pryme. And therefore she hath sent the Excalebir, Arthurs swerde, and the scawberde, and she byddyth you as ye love her that ye do that batayle to the uttirmoste withoute ony mercy, lyke as ye promysed hir whan ye spoke laste togedir in
 35 prevyté. And what damesell that bryngyth her the kynges hede whyche ye shall fyght withall, she woll make hir a quene.'

11 he *not in C* 13 hem *not in C** 16 *W* with with in 23-4 *C* distroye
 all where I may fynde these 24-5 *C* that vsen enchaütementy 33 *C* doo
 the bataill *S* omits the 34 laste *not in C* 35-6 *C* the knyghtes hede

'Now I undirstonde you,' seyde Accalon. 'I shall holde that I have promysed her, now I have the swerde. Sir, whan sawe ye my lady Morgan le Fay?'

'Ryght late,' seyde the dwarff.

Than Accalon toke hym in his armys and sayde, 'Re- 5
commaunde me unto my lady the quene and telle hir all shall be done that I promysed hir, and ellis I woll dye for hit. Now I suppose,' seyde Accalon, 'she hath made all this crauftis and enchauntemente for this batayle.'

51^v

'Sir, ye may well beleve hit,' seyde the dwarff.

10

Ryght so there come a knyght and a lady wyth six squyers, and salewed Accalon and prayde hym to aryse and com and reste hym at his maner. And so Accalon mounted uppon a voyde horse and wente with the [knyght] unto a fayre maner by a pryory, and there he had passyng good 15
chere.

Than sir Damas sente unto his brothir Outelake and bade make hym redy be to-morne at the houre of pryme, and to be in the felde to fyght with a good knyght; for he had founden a knyght that was redy to do batayle at all poyntis. 20
Whan this worde come to sir Outlake he was passyng hevvy, for he was woundid a lytyll tofore thorow bothe his thyghes with a glayve, and he made grete dole; but as he was wounded he wolde a takyn the batayle an honde.

So hit happed at that tyme, by the meanys of Morgan le 25
Fay, Accalon was with sir Oughlake lodged. And whan he harde of that batayle and how Oughlake was wounded he seyde that he wolde fyght for hym because that Morgan le Fay had sent hym Excaliber and the shethe for to fyght with the knyght on the morne. This was the cause sir 30
Accalon toke the batayle uppon hym. Than sir Outelake was passyng glad and thanked sir Accalon with all his herte that he wolde do so muche for hym. And therewithall sir Outlake sente unto his brother sir Damas that he hadde

1 C yow wel sayd

2 Sir not in C

6 C my lady Quene

10 Sir not in C

14 W the kyng C the knyghte 23 C with a spere† W's reading was
certainly in the original text. Malory must have telescoped the following two
sentences from F (Huith Merlin, f. 203d): (a) i vint li autres freres tout naurés d'une
plaie que uns chevaliers li avoit faite; (b) (Morgan's remark) 'gardés que vous
n'en parlés a vostre frere'. Et cil dist qu'il vaurroit mieus estre ferus d'une glaive
par mi la cuisse k'il en parlast 34 W sente unto C* sente word vnto

a knyght redy that sholde fyght with hym in the felde be the houre of pryme.

So on the morne sir Arthure was armed and well horsed, and asked sir Damas, 'Whan shall we to the felde?'

5 'Sir,' seyde sir Damas, 'ye shall hyre masse.'

And so Arthure herde a masse, and whan masse was done
52^r there com a squyre 'on a grete hors' and asked sir Damas if his knyght were redy, 'for oure k[n]ygth is redy in the felde.' Than sir Arthure mounted uppon horsebak. And
10 there were all the knyghtes and comons of that contray, and so by all their advyces there was chosyn twelve good men of the contrey for to wayte uppon the two knyghtes.

And ryght as Arthure was on horsebak, there com a damesel fromme Morgan le Fay and brought unto sir
15 Arthure a swerde lyke unto Excaliber and the scawberde, and seyde unto Arthure, 'She sendis here youre swerde for grete love.' And he thanke hir and wente hit had bene so; but she was falce, for the swerde and the scawberde was counterfete and brutyll and false.

(9) 20 Than they dressed hem on two partyes of the felde and lette their horses ren so faste that aythir smote other in the myddis of the shelde, and their sperys helde, that bothe horse and man wente to the erthe, and than they stert up bothe and pulde oute their swerdis.

25 The meanewhyle that they were thus at the batayle com the Damesel of the Lake into the felde that put Merlyon undir the stone. And she com thidir for the love of kynge Arthur, for she knew how Morgan le Fay had ordayned for Arthur shold have bene slayne that day, and therefore she
30 come to save his lyff.

And so they went egerly to the batayle and gaff many

7 *W* a squyre and and asked *C** a squyer on a grete hors & asked *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 208a): et lors vint laiens sour un grant ronchin uns escuiers 8 *W* kyght *C** knyght 16 *C* Morgan le fey sendeth 20 *C* on bothe partyes 21-2 *C* in the myddes of the shelde with their speres hede† *F* (*Huth Merlin*, f. 208c): si durement que li escu ne li haubert qu'il tenoient as boins (poins ?) ne les garandissent qu'il ne se metent es chars nues les fers des glaives. Mais de chou lour avint il bien que a chelui caup n'en i out nule plaie mortel . . . Après s'entre hurtent des cors et des visages si durement qu'il chairent a la terre. *Malory seems to have telescoped this passage as follows:* li glaives qu'il tenoient ne les garandissent qu'il ne . . . chairent a la terre 28-9 *C* had soo ordeyned that kynge Arthur shold

grete strokes. But allwayes Arthurs swerde bote nat lyke Accalons swerde, and for the moste party every stroke that Accalon gaff he wounded sir Arthure sore, that hit was mervayle he stood, and allwayes his blood felle frome hym faste. Whan Arthure behelde the grounde so sore bebledde 5 he was dismayde. And than he demed treson, that his swerde was chonged, for his swerde bote nat steele as hit was wonte to do. Therefore he dred hym sore to be dede, for 52^r ever hym semyd that the swerde in Accalons honde was Excaliber, for at every stroke that Accalon stroke he drewe 10 bloode on Arthure.

'Now, knyght,' seyde Accolon unto Arthure, 'kepe the well frome me!' But Arthure answered not agayne, but gaff hym such a buffette on the helme that he made hym to stowpe nyghe fallyng to the erthe. Than sir Accalon 15 wythdrewe hym a lytyll, and com on wyth Excaliber on heyght, and smote sir Arthure suche a buffette that he fylle ny to the erthe. Than were they bothe wrothe oute of mesure and gaff many sore strokis.

But allwayes sir Arthure loste so muche bloode that hit 20 was mervayle he stode on his feete, but he was so full of knyghthode that he endured the payne. And sir Accolon loste nat a dele of blood; therefore he waxte passynge lyght, and sir Arthure was passynge fyeble and [wente] veryly to have dyed, but for all that he made countenaunce as he 25 myght welle endure and helde Accolon as shorte as he myght. But Accolon was so bolde because of Excalyber that he wexed passyng hardy. But all men that behelde hem seyde they sawe nevyr knyght fyght so well as Arthur ded, conciderynge the bloode that he had bled; but all that peple 30 were sory that thes two brethirne wolde nat accorde.

So allwayes they fought togedir as fers knyghtes, and at the laste kynge Arthure withdrew hym a lytyll for to reste hym, and sir Accolon callyd hym to batayle and seyde, 'Hit is no tyme for me to suffir the to reste,' and therewith he 35 come fersly uppon Arthure. But Arthur therewith was

7 C boote not styl 18-9 oute of mesure *not in C* 19 C gaf eche other
 22 C that knyghtly he endured 24 W and veryly C* and wende veryly
 25-6 C as though he myght 30-1 C† he bled Soo was all the peple sory for
 hym but the two bretheren 32-3 at the last *not in C*

wroth for the bloode that he had loste, and smote Accolon
 53^r on hyghe uppon the helme so myghtly that he made hym
 nyghe falle to the erthe; and therewith Arthurs swerde
 braste at the crosse and felle on the grasse amonge the
 5 bloode, and the pomell and the sure handyls he helde in
 his honde. Whan kynge Arthure saw that, he was in grete
 feare to dye, but allwayes he helde up his shelde and loste
 no grounde nother batyd no chere.

(10) Than sir Accolon began with wordis of treson and seyde,
 10 'Knyght, thou art overcom and mayste nat endure, and also
 thou art wepynles, and loste thou haste much of thy bloode,
 and I am full loth to sle the. Therefore yelde the to me
 recreaunte.'

'Nay,' seyde sir Arthur, 'I may nat so, for I promysed by
 15 the feythe of my body to do this batayle to the uttermuste
 whyle my lyff lastith, and therefore I had levir to dye with
 honour than to lyve with shame. And if hit were possible
 for me to dye an hondred times, I had levir to dye so oufte
 than yelde me to the. For though I lak wepon, yett shall I
 20 lak no worshippe, and if thou sle me wepynles that shall
 be thy shame.'

'Well,' seyde Accolon, 'as for that shame I woll nat spare.
 Now kepe the fro me, for thou art but a dede man!' And
 therewith Accolon gaff hym such a stroke that he fell
 25 nyghe to the erthe, and wolde have had Arthure to have
 cryed hym mercy. But sir Arthure preced unto Accolon
 with his shelde and gaff hym wyth the pomell in his honde
 suche a buffette that he reled three strydes abake.

Whan the Damesell of the Lake behelde Arthure, how
 30 full of prouesse his body was, and the false treson that was
 wrought for hym to have had hym slayne, she had grete
 peté that so good a knyght and such a man of worship
 sholde so be destroyed. And at the nexte stroke sir Accolon
 53^v stroke at hym suche a stroke that by the damesels inchaunte-
 35 mente the swerde Excaliber fell oute of Accalons honde to the
 erthe, and therewithall sir Arthure lyghtly lepe to hit and

3 C to falle	6 C his handes	10 S maxste not	13 C as recreaunt	16 C
whyle me lasteth the lyf	22 C as for the shame	28 C that he went	33-	
4 C Accolon stroke hym	34-5 W inchauntemente that the swerde	C* en-		
chaumentement the swerd				

gate hit in his honde, and forthwithall he knew hit that hit was his swerde Excalyber. 'A,' seyde Arthure, 'thou haste bene frome me all to longe and mucche damage hast thou done me!'

And therewith he aspyed the scawberde by his syde, and suddaynly he sterte to hym and pulled the scawberte frome hym and threw hit frome hym as fer as he myght throw hit. 'A, sir knyght,' seyde kynge Arthur, 'this day haste thou done me grete damage wyth this swerde. Now ar ye com unto youre deth, for I shall nat warraunte you but ye shall be as well rewarded with this swerde or ever we departe as ye have rewarded me, for mucche payne have ye made me to endure and much bloode have y loste.'

And therewith sir Arthure raced on hym with all his myght and pulde hym to the erthe, and than raced of his helme and gaff hym suche a buffete on his hede that the bloode com oute at his erys, nose, and mowthe.

'Now woll I sle the!' seyde Arthure.

'Sle me ye may well,' seyde sir Accolon, 'and hit please you, for ye ar the beste knyght that ever I founde, and I se well that God is with you. But for I promysed,' seyde Accolon, 'to do this batayle to the uttirmyst and never to be recreaunte while I leved, therefore shall I never yelde me with my mowthe, but God do with my body what He woll.'

Than sir Arthure remembirde hym and thought he scholde have sene this knyght.

'Now telle me,' seyde Arthure, 'or I woll sle the, of what contrey ye be and of what courte.'

'Sir knyght,' seyde sir Accolon, 'I am of the ryall courte of kyng Arthure, and my name is Accolon of Gaule.'

Than was Arthure more dismayde than he was tofore- honde, for than he remembirde hym of his sister Morgan le Fay and of the enchaunement of the shippe. 'A, sir k[n]yght, I pray you [telle me] who gaff you this swerde and by whom ye had hit.'

Than sir Accolon bethought hym and seyde, 'Wo worthe this swerde! for by hit I have gotyn my dethe.'

'Hit may well be,' seyde the kynge.

1 C knewe that 2 C & sayd thow 13 W ye loste C* I lost 14, 15 C
rushed 17 C his nose & his mouthe 34 C knyght sayd he I (see note)

'Now, sir,' seyde Accolon, 'I woll tell you: this swerde hath bene in my kepyng the moste party of this twelve monthe, and Morgan le Fay, kyng Uryence wyff, sente hit me yestirday by a dwarfe to the entente to sle kyng Arthure, 5 hir brothir; for ye shall undirstonde that kyng Arthure ys the man in the worlde that she hatyth moste, because he is moste of worship and of prouesse of ony of hir bloode. Also she lovyth me oute of mesure as paramour, and I hir agayne. And if she myght bryng hit aboute to sle Arthure 10 by hir crauftis, she wolde sle hir husbonde kyng Uryence lyghtly. And than had she devysed to have me kyng in this londe and so to reigne, and she to be my quene. But that is now done,' seyde Accolon, 'for I am sure of my deth.'

15 'Well,' seyde kyng Arthure, 'I fele by you ye wolde have bene kyng of this londe, yett hit had be grete damage to have destroyed your lorde,' seyde Arthure.

'Hit is trouthe,' seyde Accolon, 'but now I have tolde you the trouthe, wherefore I pray you tell me of whens ye 20 ar and of what courte.'

'A, Accolon,' seyde kyng Arthure, 'now y let the wete that I am kyng Arthure that thou haste done grete damage t[o].'

When Accolon herd that he cryed on-lowde, Fayre 25 swete lorde, have mercy on me, for I knew you nat.'

'A, sir Accolon,' seyde kyng Arthure, 'mercy thou shalt have because I fele be thy wordis at this time thou knewest 54^v me nat, but I fele by thy wordis that thou haste agreed to the deth of my persone, and therefore thou art a traytoure; but 30 I wyte the the less for my sistir Morgan le Fay by hir false crauftis made the to agré to hir fals lustes. But I [shall] be sore avenged uppon hir, that all Crystendom shall speke of hit. God knowyth I have honoured hir and worshipped hir more than all my kyn, and more have I trusted hir than my 35 wyff and all my kyn affir.'

Than kyng Arthure called the kepers of the felde and

4 C to this entente that I shold slee 4-5 entente . . . undirstonde repeated in
C 11 C hadde she me deuysed to be kyng 16 yett not in C 22-3 C
Arthure to whome thou haste done grete domage 23 W te 27-8 C knowest
not my persone But I vnderstand wel by 31 C agree and consente 34-5 C
myn owne wyf 36 C syr Arthure

seyde, 'Sirres, commyth hyder, for here ar we two knyghtes that have foughtyn unto grete damage unto us bothe, and lykly eche of us to have slayne other, and had ony of us knowyn othir, here had bene no batayle nothir no stroke stryken.' Than all alowde cryed Accolon unto all the 5 knyghtes and men that were [there,] and seyde, 'A, lordis! This knyght that I have foughten withall is the moste man of prouesse and of worship in the worlde, for hit is hymself kyng Arthure, oure all lyege lorde, and with myssehappe and mysseadventure have I done this batayle with the lorde 10 and knyng that I am withholdyn withall.'

Than all the peple felle downe on her knees and cryed (12) kyng Arthure mercy. 'Mercy shall ye have,' seyde Arthure. 'Here may ye se what soddeyn adventures befallys ouftyn of arraunte knyghtes, how that I have foughtyn with a knyght 15 of myne owne unto my grete damage and his bothe. But, syrs, because I am sore hurte and he bothe, and I had grete nede of a lytyll reste, ye shall undirstonde this shall be the opynyon betwyxte you two brethirne:

'As to the, sir Damas, for whom I have bene champyon 20 and wonne the felde of this knyght, yett woll I juge. Because 55^r ye, sir Damas, ar called an [o]rgulus knyght and full of vylony, and nat worth of prouesse of youre dedis, therefore woll I that ye geff unto youre brother all the hole maner with the apportenaunce undir this fourme, that sir Outelake 25 holde the maner of you and yerely to gyff you a palfrey to ryde uppon, for that woll becom you bettir to ryde on than uppon a courser. Also I charge the, sir Damas, uppon payne of deth, that thou never distresse no knyghtes araunte that ryde on their adventure, and also that thou restore thyse 30 twenty knyghtes, that thou haste kepte longe presoners, of all their harmys that they be contente for. And ony of them com to my courte and complayne on the, be my hede, thou shalt dye therefore!

'Also, sir Oughtlake, as to you, because ye ar named a 35 good knyght and full of prouesse and trew and jantyll in all

3 C other yf if had happed soo And hadde ony 4 W had had bene 6 C
men that were thene there gadred to gyder and sayd 7-8 C* with all the
whiche me sore repenteth is the mooste man of prowesse of manhode and of worship
9 C our alther liege 11 C I am holden with all 14 soddeyn not in C
18 this shall be not in C 22 W ergulus 32 C and yf 33 C of the

your dedis, this shall be your charge I wolle gyff you: that in all goodly hast ye com unto me and my courte, and ye shall be a knyght of myne, and if your dedis be thereafter I shall so proferre you by the grace of God that ye shall in shorte
 5 tyme be in ease as for to lyve as worshipfully as your brother Damas.'

'God thonke your largenesse of your grete goodnesse and of your bounté! I shall be frome hensforewarde in all tymes at your commaundement. For, [sir, said] sir Ought-
 10 lake, 'as God wolde, I was hurte but late with an adventures knyght thorow bothe the thyghes, and ellys had I done this batayle with you.'

'God wolde,' seyde sir Arthure, 'hit had bene so, for than had nat I bene hurte as I am. I shall tell you the cause
 15 why: for I had nat bene hurte as I am, had nat bene myne
 55^v owne swerde that was stolyn frome me by treson; and this batayle was ordeyned aforehonde to have slayne me, and so hit was broughte to the purpose by false treson and by enchauntment.'

20 'Alas,' seyde sir Outlake, 'that is grete pité that ever so noble a man as ye ar of your dedis and prouesse, that ony man or woman myght fynde in their hertis to worche ony treson agenst you.'

'I shall rewarde them,' seyde Arthure. 'Now telle me,'
 25 seyde Arthure, 'how far am I frome Camelot?'

'Sir, ye ar two dayes journey.'

'I wolde be at som place of worship,' seyde sir Arthur, 'that I myght reste me.'

'Sir,' seyde Outlake, 'hereby is a ryche abbey of your
 30 elders foundation, of nunnys, but three myle hens.'

So the kynge toke his leve of all the peple and mounted uppon horsebak and sir Accolon with hym.

And whan they were com to the abbey he lete fecch lechis and serchid his woundis and sir Accolons bothe. But
 35 sir Accolon deyed within four dayes, for he had bled so much blood that he myght nat lyve, but kynge Arthure

5 as not in C

7 grete not in C

9 C For syr said syr

11 C thyes

that greued me sore & els

18-19 C by fals enchauntement

24 C Arthur

in short tyme by the grace of god Now

26-7 C iourney ther fro I wold

fayn be at

29 C syr Ontzelake

was well recoverde. So whan Accolon was dede he lette sende hym in an horse-bere with six knyghtes unto Camelot, and bade 'bere hym unto my systir, Morgan le Fay, and sey that I sende her hym to a present. And telle hir I have my swerde Excalyber and the scawberde.' So they departe 5 with the body.

The meanewhyle Morgan le Fay had wente kynge (13) Arthure had bene dede. So on a day she aspyed kynge Uryence lay on slepe on his bedde, than she callyd unto hir a mayden of her counseyle and sayde, 'Go fecche me my lordes 10 swerde, for I saw never bettir tyme to sle hym than now.'

'A, madame,' seyde the damesell, 'and ye sle my lorde ye can never ascape.'

'Care the not,' sayde Morgan, 'for now I se my tyme is 16 beste to do hit, and therefore hyghe the faste and fecche me 15 the swerde.'

Than this damesell departed and founde sir Uwayne slepyng uppon a bedde in anothir chambir. So she wente unt[o] sir Uwayne and awaked hym and bade hym 'aryse and awayte on my lady youre modir, for she woll sle the kynge 20 youre fadir slepyng on his bedde, for I go to fecch his swerde.'

'Well,' seyde sir Uwayne, 'go on your way and lette medele.'

Anone the damesell brought the quene the swerde with quakyng hondis. And lyghtly she toke the swerde and 25 pullyd hit oute, and wente boldely unto the beddis syde and awayted how and where she myght sle hym beste. And as she hevvyd up the swerde to smyte, sir Uwayne lepte unto his modir and caught hir by the honde and seyde,

'A, fende, what wolt thou do? And thou were nat my 30 modir, with this swerde I sholde smyte of thyne hede! A,' seyde sir Uwayne, 'men seyde that Merlyon was begotyn of a fende, but I may say an erthely fende bare me.'

'A, fayre son Uwayne, have mercy uppon me! I was tempted with a fende, wherefore I cry the mercy. I woll 35 nevermore do so. And save my worship and discover me nat!'

3 C and said bere hym 9 C lay in his bedde slepyng 14-15 C tyme in
the whiche it is best 19 Wunte C vnto 28 C she lyfte vp 32-3 C
of a deuylle 33 C erthely deuylle 35 C with a deuylle

'On this covenante,' seyde sir Uwayne, 'I woll forgyff you: so ye woll never be aboute to do such dedis.'

'Nay, son, and that I make you assuraunce.'

- (14) Then come tydynges unto Morgan le Fay that Accolon
 5 was dede and his body brought unto the chirche, and how
 kyng Arthure had his swerde ayen. But whan quene
 Morgan wyste that Accolon was dede, she was so sorowfull
 56^v that nye hir herte to-braste. But bycause she wolde nat hit
 were knowyn oute, she keppe hir countenaunce and made
 10 no sembelaunce of dole, but welle sche wyste, and she abode
 tylle hir brother Arthure come thydir, there sholde no golde
 go for hir lyff.

Than she wente unto the quene Gwenyvere and askid hir
 leve to ryde into hir contrey.

- 15 'Ye may abyde,' seyde the quene, 'tyll youre brother the
 kyng com home.'

'I may nat, madame,' seyde Morgan le Fay, 'for I have
 suche hasty tydynges.'

'Well,' seyde the quene, 'ye may departe whan ye woll.'

- 20 So erely on the morne, or hit was day, she toke hir horse
 and rode all that day and moste party of the nyght, and on the
 morne by none she com to the same abbey of nonnys whereas
 lay kyng Arthure, and she wyste (welle) that he was there.
 And anone she asked where he was, and they answerde and
 25 seyde how he was leyde hym on his bedde to slepe, 'for he
 had but lytyll reste this three nyghtes.'

'Well,' seyde she, 'I charge that none of you awake hym
 tyll I do.'

- And than she alyght of hir horse and thought for to
 30 stele away Excaliber, his swerde. And she wente streyte
 unto his chambir, and no man durste disobey hir comaunde-
 ment. And there she found Arthur aslepe on his bedde,
 and Excalyber in his ryght honde naked. Whan she sawe
 that, she was passyng hevvy that she myght nat com by the
 35 swer[d]e withoute she had awaked hym, and than she wyste
 welle she had bene dede. So she t[o]ke the scawberde and
 went hir way to horsebak.

9 C oute ward C† countece naun & 18 C* tydynges that I maye not
 tary 23-4 C* & she knowyng he was there she asked W wyste nat that (see note)
 24-5 and seyde not in C 26 C had had 36 W take 37 C* on horsbak

Whan the kynge awoke and myssed his scawberde, he was wroth, and so he asked who had bene there, and they seyde his sister, quene Morgan le Fay, had bene 57^r there and had put the scawberde undir hir mantell and is gone.

'Alas,' seyde Arthure, 'falsly have ye wacched me.'

'Sir,' seyde they all, 'we durst nat disobey your sistyrs commaundemente.'

'A,' seyde the kynge, 'lette fecch me the beste horse that may be founde, and bydde sir Outlake arme hym in all hast 10 and take anothir good horse and ryde with me.'

So anone the kynge and sir Outlake were well armyd and rode aftir this lady. And so they com be a crosse and founde a cowerde, and they asked the pore man if there cam ony lady late rydyng that way. 'Sir,' seyde this pore man, 'ryght 15 late com a lady rydyng this way with a fourty horses, 'and to yonder forest she rode.' And so they folowed faste, and within a whyle Arthur had a syght of Morgan le Fay. Than he chaced as faste as he myght. Whan she aspyed hym folowyng her, she rode a grete pace thorow 20 the foreste tyll she com to a playn. And when she sawe she myght nat ascape she rode unto a lake thereby and seyde, 'Whatsoever com of me, my brothir shall nat have this scawberde!' And than she lete throwe the scawberde in the deppyst of the watir. So hit sanke, for hit was hevy of golde 25 and precious stonys. Than she rode into a valey where many grete stonys were, and whan she sawe she muste be overtake, she shope herself, horse and man, by enchauntemente unto grete marbyll stonys.

And anone withall come kynge Arthure and sir Outlake 30 whereas the kynge myght know his sistir and her men and one knyght frome another. 'A,' seyde the kynge, 'here may ye se the vengeance of God! And now am I sory this mysaventure is befallle.' And than he loked for the scawberde, but hit wold nat be founde; so he turned to the abbey 35 there she come fro. So whan Arthure was gone they turned all their lyknesse as she and they were before, and seyde, 57^v

4-5 *C* was gone 9 that *not in C* 15 late *not in S* 17 *C** (*see note*) with a
xl horses and to yonder forest she rode Thenne they spored theire horses and
folowed 20 *C* gretter paas 29 *C* marbyll stone† 31 *W* myght nat (*see note*)

- (15) 'Sirs, now may we go where we wyll.'
 Than seyde Morgan le Fay, 'Saw ye of Arthure my brother?'
 'Yee,' seyde hir men, 'and that ye sholde have founde, and
 we myght a stered of one stede; for by his amyvestyall
 5 countenance [he] wolde have caused us to have fledde.'

'I beleve you,' seyde the quene.

- So anone after as she rode she mette a knyght ledyng
 another knyght on horsebake before hym, bounde hande and
 foote, blyndefelde, to have drowned hym in a fowntayne.
 10 Whan she sawe this knyght so bounde she asked,

'What woll ye do with that knyght?'

'Lady,' seyde he, 'I woll drowne hym.'

'For what cause?' she asked.

- 'For I founde hym with my wyff, and she shall have the
 15 same deth anone.'

'That were pyté,' seyde Morgan le Fay. 'Now, what sey
 ye, knyght? Is hit trouthe that he seyth of you?'

'Nay, truly, madame, he seyth nat ryght on me.'

'Of whens be ye,' seyde the quene, 'and of what contrey?'

- 20 'I am of the courte of kynge Arthure, and my name is
 Manessen, cosyn unto Accolon of Gaule.'

'Yesey well, and for the love of hym ye shall be delyverde, and
 ye shal have youre adversary in the same case that ye were in.'

- So this Manessen was loused, and the other kn[y]ght
 25 bounde. And anone Manessen unarmed hym and armede
 hymself in his harneyse, and so mounted on horsebak and
 the knyght afore hym, and so threw hym in the fountayne
 and so drowned hym. And than he rode unto Morgan ayen
 and asked if she wolde onythyng unto Arthure. 'Telle
 30 hym,' seyde she, 'that I rescued the nat for the love of hym,
 but for the love of Accolon, and tell hym I feare hym nat
 whyle I can make me and myne in lyknesse of stonys, and
 58^r lette hym wete I can do much more whan I se my tyme.'

- And so she departed into the contrey of Gore, and there
 35 was she rychely receyved, and made hir castels and townys
 strong, for allwey she drad muche kyng Arthure.

4 *W* we me myght *C* haue stered 4 *C* armyuestal (see note) 17-18 *C** of
 yow she said to the knyght that shold be drowned nay truly 21 *C* Manassen
 22 *C* wel said she and 23 *C* caas ye be in 30 seyde she *not in C* 32 *C* me
 and them that ben with me in 33 much (*C* moche) *not in S*

VI

GAWAIN, YWAIN, AND MARHALT

[*Winchester MS.*, ff. 58^r–70^v;
Caxton, Book IV, chs. 16–29]

CAXTON'S RUBRICS

- Ch. 16. How the Damoyssel of the Lake saved kynge Arthur from a mantel which sholde have brente hym.
- „ 17. How syr Gawayn and syr Ewayn mette with twelve fayr damoysselles, and how they compleyned on syr Marhaus.*
- „ 18, 19. How syr Marhaws justed with syr Gawayn and syr Ewayn and overthrewe them bothe.
- „ 20. How syr Marhaus, syr Gawayn, and syr Ewayn mette the damoysselles and eche of them toke one.
- „ 21. How a knyght and a dwarf stroof for a lady.
- „ 22. How kyng Pelleas suffred hymself to be taken prysoner by cause he wolde have a syght of his lady.
- „ 23. How syr Gawayn came to the lady Ettard and laye by hyr, and how syr Pelleas fonde them slepyng.
- „ 24. How syr Pelleas loved no more Ettard by the moyan of the Damoyssel of the Lake whom he loved ever after.
- „ 25. How syr Marhaus rode with the damoyssel, and how he came to the duke of the South Marchis.
- „ 26. How syr Marhaus faught wyth the duke and his six sones and made them to yelde them.
- „ 27. How syr Ewayn rode wyth the damoyssel of forty yere of age, and how he gate the prys at tornoyeng.
- „ 28. How syr Ewayn faught with two knyghtes and overcam hem.
- „ 29. How at the yeres ende alle thre knyghtes with theyr thre damoysselles metten at the fontayne.

* C Marhans

WHAN the kyng had well rested hym at the abbey 58^r
he rode unto Camelot and founde his quene and his
barownes ryght glad of his commyng. And whan they herde
of his stronge adventures, as hit is before rehersed, they all
had mervayle of the falsehede of Morgan le Fay. Many 5
knyghtes wysshed hir brente. Than come Manessen to
courte and told the kyng of his adventure. 'Well,' seyde
the kyng, 'she is a kynde sister. I shall so be avengid on
hir and I lyve, that all crystendom shall speke of hit.'

So on the morne there cam a damesell on message frome 10
Morgan le Fay to the kyng, and she brought with hir the
rycheste mantell that ever was sene in the courte, for hit
was sette all full of precious stonys as one myght stonde
by another, and therein were the rycheste stonys that ever
the kyng saw. And the damesell seyde, 'Your sister sendyth 15
you this mantell and desyryth that ye sholde take this gyfte
of hir, and what thyng she hath offended she woll amende
hit at your owne plesure.' When the kyng behelde this
mantell hit pleased hym much. He seyde but lytyll.

With that come the Damesell of the Lake unto the kyng 20 (16)
and seyde, 'Sir, I muste speke with you in prevyité.'

'Sey on,' seyde the kyng, 'what ye woll.'

'Sir,' seyde this damesell, 'putt nat uppon you this
mantell tylle ye have sene more, and in no wyse lat hit nat
com on you nother on no knyght of youres tyll ye com- 25
maunde the brynger thereof to putt hit uppon hir.'

'Well,' seyde the kyng, 'hit shall be as you counseyle me.'

And than he seyde unto the damesell that com frome his 58^v
sister, 'Damesell, this mantell that ye have brought me, I
woll se hit uppon you.'

'Sir,' she seyde, 'hit woll nat beseme me to were a kynges
garmente.' 30

'Be my hede,' seyde Arthure, 'ye shall were hit or hit
com on my bak other on ony mannys bak that here is.'

And so the kyng made to putt hit uppon hir. And 35
forthwithall she fell downe deede and never spoke worde
after, and brente to colys.

4 C straunge adventures
he said but lytel

10 on message *not in C*
36 C neuer more

13 C as ful

19 C but

Than was the kynge wondirly wroth more than he was toforehande, and seyde unto kynge Uryence, 'My sistir, your wyff, is allway aboute to betray me, and welle I wote other ye or my neuwe, your son, is counseyle with hir to have
 5 me distroyed. But as for you,' seyde the kynge unto kynge Uryence, 'I deme nat gretly that ye be of counseyle, for Accolon confessed to me his owne mowthe that she wolde have distroyed you as well as me; therefore y holde you excused. But as for your son sir Uwayne, I holde hym
 10 suspecte. Therefore I charge you, putt hym oute of my courte.' So sir Uwayne was discharged.

And whan sir Gawayne wyste that, he made hym redy to go with hym, 'for whoso banyshyth my cosyn jarmayne shall banyshe me.' So they too departed and rode into a
 15 grete foreste, and so they com unto an abbey of monkys, and there were well logged. Butt whan the kynge wyste that sir Gawayne was departed frome the courte, there was made grete sorowe amonge all the astatis. 'Now,' seyde Gaherys, Gawaynes brother, 'we have loste two good
 20 knyghtes for the love of one.'

So on the morne they herde the masses in the abbey and so rode forth tyll they com to the grete foreste. Than was
 59^r sir Gawayne ware in a valey by a turette twelve fayre damesels and two knyghtes armed on grete horses, and the
 25 damesels wente to and fro by a tre. And than was sir Gawayne ware how there hyng a whyght shelde on that tre, and ever as the damesels com by hit they spette uppon
 (17) hit and som threwe myre uppon the shelde. Than sir Gawayne and sir Uwayne wente and salewed them, and
 30 asked why they dud that dyspyte to the shelde.

'Sir,' seyde the damesels, 'we shall telle you. There is a knyght in this contrey that owyth this whyght shelde, and he is a passyng good man of his hondis, but he hatyth
 all ladyes and jantylwomen, and therefore we do all this
 35 dyspyte to that shelde.'

'I shall sey you,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'hit besemyth evyll a good knyght to dyspyse all ladyes and jantylwomen; and peraventure thoughe he hate you he hath som cause, and

6 C of her counceill
 came to a grete

7 C by his own
 38 cause *not in* C†

22 C they rode forth tyl that they

peraventure he lovyth in som other placis ladyes and jantyll-women and y(s) beloved agayne, and he be suche a man of prousse as ye speke of. Now, what is his name?

'Sir,' they seyde, 'his name is sir Marhaus, the kynges son of Irelande.'

'I knowe hym well,' seyde sir Uwayne, 'he is a passynge good knyght as ony on lyve, for I sawe hym onys preved at a justys where many knyghtes were gadird, and that tyme there myght no man withstonde hym.'

'A,' sayde sir Gawayne, 'damesels, methynke ye ar to blame, for hit is to suppose he that hyng that shelde there he woll nat be longe therefro, and than may tho knyghtes macche hym on horsebak. And that is more youre worshyp than thus to do, for I woll abyde no lenger to se a knyghtes shelde so dishonoured.'

And therewith sir Gawayne and sir Uwayne departed a lytyll fro them. And than ware they ware where sir Marhaus com rydyng on a grete horse streyte toward hem. And whan the twelve damesels sawe sir Marhaus they fledde to the turret as they were wylde, that som of hem felle by the way. Than that one of the knyghtes of the towre dressed his shylde and seyde on hyghe, 'Sir Marhaus, defende the!' And so they ran togedyrs that the knyght brake his spere on sir Marhaus, but Marhaus smote hym so harde that he brake his necke and his horse bak. That sawe the other knyght of the turret and dressed hym to Marhaus, that so egerly they mette that this knyght of the turret was smyte doune, horse and man, dede.

And than sir Marhaus rode unto his shylde and sawe how hit was defoyled, and sayde, 'Of this dispyte of parte I am avenged. But yet for hir love that gaff me this whyght shelde I shall were the and hange myne where that was.' And so he honged hit aboute his necke. Than he rode streyte unto sir Gawayne and to sir Uwayne and asked them what they dud there. They answerde hym and they come frome kynge Arthurs courte for to se adventures. 'Welle,' seyde sir Marhaus, 'here am I redy, an adventures

1 *W* and & 2 *W* ye beloved C† to be loued 7 *C* only is on lyne 14 to
do *not in C* 26 *C* dressyd hym toward 27 *C* they mette so egerly to gyders
30-1 *C* of this despyte I am a parte auengyd But for 32 *C** where thow was

knyght that woll fulfylle any adventure that ye woll desyre.' And so departyd frome hem to fecche his raunge.

'Late hym go,' seyde sir Uwayne unto sir Gawayne, 'for he is a passynge good knyght os ony lyvyng. I wolde not
5 be my wylle that ony of us were macched with hym.'

'Nay,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'nat so! Hit were shame to us and he were nat assayed, were he never so good a knyght.'

'Welle,' seyde sir Uwayne, 'I wolle assay hym before you, for I am weyker than ye, and yff he smyte me downe
10 than may ye revenge me.'

So thes two knyghtes come togedir with grete raundom,
60^r that sir Uwayne smote sir Marhaus, that his spere braste in pecis on the shelde. And sir Marhaus smote hym so sore that horse and man he bare to the erthe, and hurte
15 sir Uwayne on the lefte syde. Than sir Marhaus turned his horse and rode thidir as he com fro and made hym redy with his spere. Whan sir Gawayne saw that, he dressed his shelde, and than they feautirde their sperys, and they com togedyrs with all the myght of their horses, that eyther
20 knyght smote other so harde in myddis the sheldis. But sir Gawaynes spere brake, but sir Marhaus speare helde, and therewith sir Gawayne and his horse russedh downe to the erthe.

And lyghtly sir Gawayne wan on his feete and pulde oute
25 his swerde and dressed hym toward sir Marhaus on foote. And sir Marhaus saw that he pulde oute his swerde, and began to com to sir Gawayne on horsebak.

'Sir knyght,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'alyght on foote, or ellis I woll sle thyne horse.'

30 'Gramercy,' sayde sir Marhaus, 'of your jentylnesse! Ye teche me curtesy, for hit is nat commendable one knyght to be on horsebak and the other on foote.'

And therewith sir Marhaus sette his spere agayne a tre, and alyght and tyed his horse to a tre, and dressed his shelde,
35 and eyther com unto other egirly and smote togedyrs with hir swerdys, that hir sheldis flew in cantellys, and they bresed their helmys and hawbirkes and woundid eyther other.

4 C ony is lyuyng

they auentryd their speres

16-17 C rode toward Gawayne with his spere

24 C Gawayne rose

18 C

to be on foote and the other on horsbak

31-2 C not for one knygt

But sir Gawayne, fro hit was nine of the klok, wexed ever stronger and stronger, for by than hit cam to the howre of noone he had three tymes his myght encreased. And all this aspyed sir Marhaus and had grete wondir how his myght encreced. And so they wounded eyther other passyng sore. 5 So whan hit was 'past noone, and whan it drewe' toward evynsonge, sir Gawayns strength fyebled and woxe passyng faynte, that unnethe he myght dure no lenger, and sir Marhaus was than bygger and bygger.

'Sir knyght,' seyde sir Marhaus, 'I have welle felt that 10 60^v ye ar a passynge goode knyght and a mervaylous man of myght as ever I felte ony whyle hit lastyth, and oure quarellys ar nat grete, and therefore hit were pyté to do you hurte, for a fele ye ar passynge fyeble.'

'A,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'jantyll knyght, ye say the worde 15 that I sholde sey.'

And therewith they toke of her helmys and eyther kyssed other and there they swore togedyrs eythir to love other as brethirne. And sir Marhaus prayde sir Gawayne to lodge with hym that nyght. And so they toke their horsis and 20 rode towarde sir Marhaus maner.

And as they rode by the way, 'Sir knyght,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'I have mervayle of you, so valyaunte a man as ye be of prouesse, that ye love no ladyes and damesels.'

'Sir,' seyde sir Marhaus, 'they name me wrongfully, for 25 hit be the damesels of the turret that so name me and other suche as they be. Now shal I telle you for what cause I hate them: for they be sorsseres and inchaunters many of them, and be a knyght never so good of his body and as full of prouesse as a man may be, they woll make hym a 30 starke cowerde to have the bettir of hym. And this is the pryncipall cause that I hate them. And all good ladyes and jantyllwomen, I owghe them my servyse as a knyght ought to do.'

1 C fro it passed ix 2 by *not in C* 3 C noone & thryes his myghte was encreaced
5-7 C* sore And thenne whan it was past noone and whan it drewe toward euensonge W sore so whan hit was toward evynsonge F (MS. B.N. fr. 112, f. 19c): Et quant ce vint après nonne que Gauvain fu auques lassés 21 C
syr Marhaus hous 23-4 C merueylle that so valyaunt a man as ye be loue no ladyes ne damoyssels 25-6 C* wrongfully tho that gyue me that name but wel
I wote it ben the damoyssels

For, as the booke rehersyth in Freynsch, there was this many knyghtes that overmacched sir Gawayne for all his thryse double myght that he had: sir Launcelot de Lake, sir Trystrams, sir Bors de Gaynes, sir Percivale, sir Pelleas, 5 sir Marhaus; thes six knyghtes had the bettir of sir Gawayne.

Than within a lytyll whyle they come to sir Marhaus place [which] was in a lytyll pryory, and there they alyght, and ladyes and damesels unarmed them and hastily loked to their hurtes, for they were all three hurte. And so they 61^r 10 had good lodgyng with sir Marhaus and good chere, for whan he wyste that they were kynge Arthurs syster-sonnes he made them all the chere that lay in his power. And so they sojourned there a sevennyght and were well eased of their woundis, and at the laste departed. 'Nay,' sayde sir 15 Marhaus, 'we woll nat departe so lyghtly, for I woll brynge you thorow the foreste.' So they rode forth all three. And sir Marhaus toke with hym his grettyste spere. And so they rode thorow the foreste, and rode day be day well-nye a seven dayes or they founde ony aventure.

20 So at the laste they com into a grete foreste that was named the contrey and foreste of Arroy, and the contrey is of stronge adventures. 'In this contrey,' seyde Marhaus, 'cam nevir knyght syn hit was crystynde but he founde strange adventures.' And so they rode and cam into a depe 25 valey full of stonys, and thereby they sawe a fayre streme of watir. Aboven thereby was the hede of the streme, a fayre fountayne, and three damesels syttyng thereby. And than they rode to them and ayther salewed othir. And the eldyst had a garlonde of golde aboute her hede, and she was 30 three score wyntir of age or more, and hir heyre was whyght undir the garlonde. The secunde damselle was of thirty wyntir of age, wyth a cerclet of golde aboute her hede. The thirde damesel was but fiftene yere of age, and a garlonde of floures aboute hir hede.

35 Whan thes knyghtes had so beholde them they asked hem the cause why they sate at the fountayne. 'We be here,' seyde the damesels, 'for this cause: if we may se ony of arraunte knyghtes to teche hem unto stronge adventures.

7 C* whiche was in
(homœoteleuton)

16-18 So they rode forth . . . thorow the foreste *not in C†*
22 is *not in C†*

And ye be three knyghtes adventures and we be three damesels,
and therefore eche one of you muste chose one of us; and
whan ye have done so, we woll lede you unto three hyghe-
wayes, and there eche of you shall chose a way and his
damesell with hym. And this day twelve moneth ye muste 5 61^v
mete here agayne, and God sende you the lyves, and thereto
ye muste plyght your trouth.'

'This is well seyde,' seyde sir Marhaus. 'Now shall (20)
everyche of us chose a damesell.'

'I shall tell you,' seyde sir Uwayne, 'I am yongyst and 10
waykest of you bothe, therefore lette me have the eldyst
damesell, for she hath sene much and can beste helpe me
whan I have nede, for I have moste nede of helpe of you
bothe.'

'Now,' seyde sir Marhaus, 'I woll have the damesell of 15
thirty wyntir age, for she fallyth beste to me.'

'Well,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'I thanke you, for ye have leffte
me the yongyst and the fayryste, and hir is me moste levyste.'

Than every damesell toke hir knyght by the reygne of his
brydyll and brought hem to the three wayes, and there was 20
made promesse to mete at the fountayne that day twelve
monthe and they were lyvyng. And so they kyssed and
departed, and every k[n]ygth sette his lady behynde hym.
And sir Uwayne toke the way that lay weste, and sir
Marhaus toke the way that lay sowthe, and sir Gawayne 25
toke the way that lay northe.

Now woll we begyn at sir Gawayne that helde that way
tyll that he com to a fayre maner where dwelled an olde
knyght and a good householder. And there sir Gawayne
asked the knyght if he knewe of any adventures. 'I shall 30
shewe you to-morne,' seyde the knyght, 'mervelos adventures.'
So on the morne they rode all in same to the foreste
of adventures tyll they com to a launde, and thereby they
founde a crosse. And as they stood and hoved, there cam
by them the fayreste knyght and the semelyest man that 35
ever they sawe. But he made the grettyst dole that ever man

1 C knyghtes that seken auentesures 6 C your lyues 11 C therfor I wyl
haue 18 C and she is moost leuest to me 31-2 C† yow somme to
morne sayd the old knyghte and that merueyllous Soo 32 all in same not
in C 36 C sawe makynge the gretttest

62^r made. And than he was ware of sir Gawayne and salewed hym, and prayde to God to sende hym muche worshyp.

'As for that,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'gramercy. Also I pray to God sende you honoure and worshyp.'

5 'A,' sayde the knyght, 'I may lay that on syde, for sorow and shame commyth unto me after worshyppe.'

(21) And therewyth he passed unto that one syde of the lawnde, and on that other syde saw sir Gawayne ten knyghtes that hoved and made hem redy with hir sheldis and with hir
10 sperys agaynste that one knyght that cam by sir Gawayne. Than this one knyght feautred a grete spere, and one of the ten knyghtes encountird with hym. But this wofull knyght smote hym so harde that he felle over his horse tayle. So this dolorous knyght served them all, that at the
15 leste way he smote downe horse and man, and all he ded with one spere. And so whan they were all ten on foote they wente to the one knyght, and he stode stone-stylle and suffyrde hem to pulle hym downe of his horse, and bounde hym honde and foote, and tyed hym undir the horse
20 bely, and so led hym with hem.

'A, Jesu,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'this is a dolefull syght to se the yondir knyght so to be entreted. And hit semyth by the knyght that he sufferyth hem to bynde hym so, for he makyth no resistence.'

25 'No,' seyde [his] hoste, 'that is trouth, for, and he wolde, they all were to weyke for hym.'

'Sir,' seyde the damesell unto sir Gawayne, 'mesemyth hit were your worshyp to helpe that dolerouse knyght, for methynkes he is one of the beste knyghtes that ever I sawe.'

30 'I wolde do for hym,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'but hit semyth he wolde have no helpe.'

'No,' seyde the damesel, 'methynkes ye have no lyst to helpe hym.'

Thus as they talked they sawe a knyght on the other
62^v 35 syde of the launde all armed save the hede. And on the other syde there com a dwarff on horsebak all armed save the hede, with a grete mowthe and a shorte nose. And whan the dwarff com nyghe he seyde, 'Where is this lady

11 C auentryd a grete spere
thenne sayd

26 C to weyke soo to doo hym

31-2 C helpe

sholde mete us here?' And therewithall she com forth oute of the woode. And than they began to stryve for the lady, for the knyght seyde he wolde have hir.

'Woll we do welle?' seyde the dwarff. 'Yondir is a knyght at the crosse. Lette hit be putt uppon hym, and as he demeth 5 hit, so shall hit be.'

'I woll well,' seyde the knyght.

And so they wente all three unto sir Gawayne and tolde hym wherefore they stroof.

'Well, sirres, woll ye putt the mater in myne honde?' 10

'Ye, sir,' they seyde bothe.

'Now, damesell,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'ye shall stonde betwyxte them bothe, and whethir ye lyste bettir to go to he shall have you.'

And whan she was sette betwene hem bothe she lefte 15 the knyght and went to the dwarff. And than the dwarff toke hir up and wente his way syngyng, and the knyght wente his way with grete mournyng.

Than com there two knyghtes all armed and cryed on hyght, 'Sir Gawayne, knyght of the courte of kyng Arthure! 20 Make the redy in haste and juste with me!' So they ran togedirs, that eyther felle downe. And than on foote they drew there swerdis and dud full actually. The meanewhyle the other knyght went to the damesell and asked hir why she abode with that knyght, and seyde, 'If ye wolde abyde 25 with me I wolde be your faythefull knyght.'

'And with you woll I be,' seyde the damesell, 'for I may nat fynde in my herte to be with hym, for ryght now here was one knyght that scomfyted ten knyghtes, and at the laste he was cowardly ledde away. And therefore let us 30 two go whyle they fyght.' 63^r

And sir Gawayne fought with that othir knyght longe, but at the laste they accorded bothe. And than the knyght prayde sir Gawayne to lodge with hym that nyght.

So as sir Gawayne wente with this knyght he seyde, 35 'What knyght is he in this contrey that smote downe the ten knyghtes? For whan he had done so manfully he suffirde hem to bynde hym hande and foote, and so led hym away.'

5 Clete vs put it bothe vpon hym 10 C wel syrs said he 11 C ye they 20 of the
courte *not in C* 25 C† knyghte and yf ye 28 ryght *not in C* 35 C he asked hym

'A,' sayde the knyght, 'that is the beste knyght I trow in the worlde and the moste man of prouesse, and hit is the grettyst pyté of hym as of ony knyght lyvyng, for he hath be served so as he was this tyme more than ten tymes. And
 5 his name hyght sir Pelleas; and he lovyth a grete lady in this contrey, and hir name is Ettarde. And so whan he loved hir there was cryed in this contrey a grete justis three dayes, and all this knyghtes of this contrey were there and jantyll-women. And who that preved hym the beste knyght sholde
 10 have a passyng good 'sward' and a cerclet of golde, and that cerclet the knyght sholde geff hit to the fayryste lady that was at that justis.

'And this knyght sir Pelleas was far the beste of ony that was there, and there were fyve hondred knyghtes, but there
 15 was nevyr man that ever sir Pelleas met but he stroke hym downe other ellys frome his horse, and every day of three dayes he strake downe twenty knyghtes. And therefore they gaff hym the pryce. And furthewithall he wente there-as the lady Ettarde was and gaff her the cerclet and seyde
 20 opynly she was the fayreste lady that there was, and that wolde he preve uppon ony knyght that wolde sey nay.
 (22) 'And so he chose hir for his soveraygne lady, and never to love other but her. But she was so prowde that she had
 63^v scorne of hym and seyde she wolde never love hym though
 25 he wolde dye for hir; wherefore all ladyes and jantyllwomen had scorne of hir that she was so prowde, for there were fayrer than she, and there was none that was there but and sir Pelleas wolde have profyrde hem love they wolde have shewed hym the same for his noble prouesse. And so this
 30 knyght promysed Ettarde to folow hir into this contray and nevyr to leve her tyll she loved hym, and thus he is here the moste party nyghe her and logged by a pryory.

'And every weke she sendis knyghtes to fyght with hym, and whan he hath putt hem to the worse, than woll he suffir

2-3 hit is the grettyst pyté of hym as of any knyght lyvyng, for *not in C† (homæoteleton)*. F (MS. B.N. fr. 112, f. 24a): c'est la greigneur douleur qui soit en ce pais et le chevalier que je plus plains 4 C was ène more than 10 C* a passyng good sward W a passyng good† F (MS. B.N. fr. 112, f. 24a): le tournoïement estoit assemblés en tel maniere que celle qui provee y seroit a plus belle pour loier de sa beauté emporteroit un cercle d'or qui estoit mis dessus ung glaive au milieu du tournoïement

hem wylfully to take hym presonere because he wolde have a syght of this lady. And allwayes she doth hym grete dispyte, for somtyme she makyth his knyghtes to tye hym to his horse tayle, and somtyme bynde hym undir the horse bealy. Thus in the moste shamfyllyste wyse that she can 5 thynke he is brought to hir, and all she doth hit for to cawse hym to leve this contrey and to leve his lovyng. But all this cannat make hym to leve, for, and he wolde a fought on foote, he myght have had the bettir of the ten knyghtes as well on foote as on horsebak.' 10

'Alas,' sayde sir Gawayne, 'hit is grete pyté of hym, and affir this nyght I woll seke hym to-morow in this foreste to do hym all the helpe I can.'

So on the morow sir Gawayne toke his leve of his oste, sir Carados, and rode into the foreste. And at the laste he 15 mette with sir Pelleas makynge grete mone oute of mesure; so eche of hem salewed other, and asked hym why he made such sorow. And as hit above rehersyth sir Pelleas tolde sir Gawayne. 'But allwayes I suffir her knyghtes to fare 64^r so with me as ye sawe yestirday, in truste at the laste to 20 wyne hir love; for she knoweth well all hir knyghtes sholde nat lyghtly wyne me and me lyst to fyght with them to the uttirmoste. Wherefore and I loved hir nat so sore I had lever dye an hondred tymes, and I myght dye so ofte rathir than I wolde suffir that dispyte, but I truste she woll have 25 pyté uppon me at the laste; for love causyth many a good knyght to suffir to have his entente, but alas, I am infortunat!' And therewith he made so grete dole that unnethe he myght holde hym on his horse bak.

'Now,' sayde sir Gawayne, 'leve your mournynge, and 30 I shall promyse you by the feyth of my body to do all that lyeth in my powere to gete you the love of your lady, and thereto I woll plyghte you my trouthe.'

'A,' seyde sir Pelleas, 'of what courte ar ye?'

'Sir, I am of the courte of kynge Arthure, and his sistir- 35 son, and kynge Lotte of Orkeney was my fadir, and my name is sir Gawayne.'

4 *C* some to bynd† 29 his *not in C* 34-5 *C** are ye telle me I praye yow
my good frend And thenne syr gawayne sayd I am 37-p.168, 1 *C* Gawayne
And thenne he sayd my name

'And my name is sir Pelleas, born in the Iles, and of many iles I am lorde, and never loved I lady nother damesel tyll nowe. And, sir knyght, syn ye ar so nye cosyn unto kyng Arthure and ar a kynges son, therefore betray me nat,
 5 but help me, for I may nevyr com by hir but by some good knyght, for she is in a stronge castell here faste by, within this four myle, and over all this contrey she is lady off.

'And so I may never com to hir presence but as I suffir hir knyghtes to take me, and but if I ded so that I myght
 10 have a syght of hir, I had bene dede longe ar this tyme. And yet fayre worde had I never none of hir. But whan I am brought tofore hir she rebukyth me in the fowlyst maner; and than they take me my horse and harneyse and puttyth me oute of the yatis, and she woll nat suffir me to ete
 15 nother drynke. And allwayes I offir me to be her presoner,
 64^v but that woll she nat suffir me, for I wolde desire no more, what paynes that ever I had, so that I myght have a syght of hir dayly.'

'Well,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'all this shall I amende, and
 20 ye woll do as I shall devyse. I woll have your armoure, and so woll I ryde unto hir castell and tell hir that I have slayne you, and so shall I come within hir to cause hir to cheryshe me. And than shall I do my trew parte, that ye shall nat
 (23) fayle to have the love of hir.' And there, whan sir Gawayne
 25 plyght his trouthe unto sir Pelleas to be trew and feythfull unto hym, so eche one plyght their trouthe to other, and so they chonged horse and harneyse.

And sir Gawayne departed and com to the castel where stood hir pavylyons withoute the gate. And as sone as
 30 Ettarde had aspyed sir Gawayne she fledde in toward the castell. But sir Gawayne spake on hyght and bade hir abyde, for he was nat sir Pelleas.

'I am another knyght that have slayne sir Pelleas.'

'Than do of your helme,' seyde the lady Ettarde, 'that
 35 I may se your vysage.'

So whan she saw that hit was nat sir Pelleas she made hym alyght and lad hym into hir castell, and asked hym

3 C now in an vnhappy tyme and
 13 me *not in C*
 there with syr

14 C putten
 31 But *not in C*

4 ar *not in C*
 20 C your hors and your armour
 34 Than *not in C*

11 none *not in C*
 24 C

feythfully whethir he had slayne sir Pelleas, and he seyde yee. Than he tolde hir his name was sir Gawayne, of the courte of kynge Arthure and his sistyrs son, and how he had slayne sir Pelleas. 'Truly,' seyde she, 'that is grete pyté, for he was a passynge good knyght of his body. But of all 5 men on lyve I hated hym moste, for I coude never be quytte of hym. And for ye have slayne hym I shall be your woman and to do onythyng that may please you.' So she made sir Gawayne good chere.

Than sir Gawayne sayde that he loved a lady and by no 10 meane she wolde love hym.

'Sche is to blame,' seyde Ettarde, 'and she woll nat love you, for ye that be so well-borne a man and suche a man of prouesse, there is no lady in this worlde to good for you.' 65

'Woll ye,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'promyse me to do what 15 that ye may do be the fayth of your body to gete me the love of my lady?'

'Yee, sir, and that I promyse you be my fayth.'

'Now,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'hit is yourself that I love so well; therefore holde your promyse.' 20

'I may nat chese,' seyde the lady Ettarde, 'but if I sholde be forsworne.'

And so she graunted hym to fulfille all his desyre.

So it was in the monthe of May that she and sir Gawayne wente oute of the castell and sowped in a pavylyon, and there 25 was made a bedde, and there sir Gawayne and Ettarde wente to bedde togedyrs. And in another pavylyon she leyde hir damesels, and in the thirde pavylyon she leyde parte of hir knyghtes, for than she had no drede of sir Pelleas. And there sir Gawayne lay with hir in the pavylyon two dayes 30 and two nyghtes. And on the thirde day on the morne erly sir Pelleas armed hym, for he hadde never slepte syn sir Gawayne promysed hym by the feythe of his body to com to hym unto his pavylyon by the pryory within the space of a day and a nyght. Than sir Pelleas mounted uppon 35 horsebak and com to the pavylyons that stood withoute the

3-4 and how he had slayne sir Pelleas *not in C†* 8 C that myghte 18 C ye
syre sayd she and that I promyse yow by the feythe of my body 24 C was
thenne in 26 C the lady Ettard 32-3 C* syn syr Gawayn departed from
hym for syr Gawayne had promysed hym (*homæoteleuton in W?*)

- castell, and founde in the fyrste pavylyon three knyghtes
 in three beddis, and three squyres lyggyng at their feete.
 Than wente he to the secunde pavylyon and founde four
 jantyllwomen lyggyng in four beddis. And than he yode
 5 to the thirde pavylyon and founde sir Gawayne lyggyng in
 the bed with his lady Ettarde and aythir clyppynge other
 in armys. And whan he sawe that, his hert well-nyghe
 braste for sorow, and sayde, 'Alas, that ever a knyght sholde
 be founde so falsel' And than he toke his horse and myght
 10 nat abyde no lenger for pure sorow, and whan he had ryden
 65^v nyghe half a myle he turned agayne and thought for to sle
 hem bothe. And whan he saw hem lye so bothe slepyng
 faste that unnethe he myght holde hym on horsebak for
 sorow, and seyde thus to hymself: 'Though this knyght be
 15 never so false, I woll never sle hym slepyng, for I woll never
 dystroy the hyghe Ordre of Knyghthode,' and therewith he
 departed agayne. And or he had rydden half a myle he
 returned agayne and thought than to sle hem bothe,
 20 makynge the grettyst sorow that ever man made. And whan
 he come to the pavylyons he tyed his horse to a tre and
 pulled oute his swerde naked in his honde and wente to
 them thereas they lay. And yet he thought shame to sle
 hem, and leyde the naked swerde overthawrte bothe their
 throtis, and so toke his horse and rode his way.
- 25 And whan sir Pelleas com to his pavylyons he tolde his
 knyghtes and his squyers how he had spedde, and seyde thus
 unto them: 'For youre good and true servyse ye have done
 me I shall gyff you all my goodes, for I woll go unto my
 bedde and never aryse tyll I be dede. And whan that I am
 30 dede, I charge you that ye take the herte oute of my body
 and bere hit her betwyxte two sylver dysshes and telle her
 how I sawe hir lye wyth that false knyght sir Gawayne.'
 Ryght so sir Pelleas unarmed hymself and wente unto his
 bedde makynge merveylous dole and sorow.
- 35 Than sir Gawayne and Ettarde awoke of her slepe and
 founde the naked swerd overthawrte their throtis. Than
 she knew hit was the swerde of sir Pelleas. 'Alas!' she

12 *C* sawe hem bothe soo lye slepyng
 slepyng

24 *C* waye *S* awaye

14 *C* thus *S* then

29 *C* I am dede

22-3 *C* slee them

37 *C* knewe wel

37-p. 171, 4 *C** syr Pelleas swerd Allas sayd she to sir Gawayne ye haue bitrayed

seyde, 'Sir Gawayne, ye have betrayde sir Pelleas and me,
 'for you told me you had slayne hym, and now I know wel
 it is not soo: he is on lyve'. But had he bene so uncurteyse
 unto you as ye have bene to hym, ye had bene a dede knyght.
 But ye have dissayved me, that all ladyes and damesels may
 beware be you and me.' And therewith sir Gawayne made
 hym redy and wente into the foreste. 66^r

So hit happed the Damesell of the Lake, Nynyve, mette
 with a knyght of sir Pelleas that wente on his foote in this
 foreste makynge grete doole, and she asked hym the cause; 10
 and so the wofull knyght tolde her all how his mayster and
 lorde was betrayed thorow a knyght and a lady, and how
 he woll never aryse oute of his bedde tyll he be dede.
 'Brynge me to hym,' seyde she anone, 'and y woll waraunte
 his lyfe. He shall nat dye for love, and she that hath caused 15
 hym so to love she shall be in as evylle plyte as he is or hit
 be longe to, for hit is no joy of suche a proude lady that woll
 nat have no mercy of suche a valyaunte knyght.'

Anone that knyght broute hir unto hym, and whan she
 sye hym lye on his bedde she thought she sawe never so 20
 lykly a knyght. And therewith she threw an enchaunte-
 ment upon hym, and he fell on slepe. And than she rode
 unto the lady Ettarde and charged that no man scholde
 awake hym tyll she come agayne.

So within two owres she brought the lady Ettarde thidir, 25
 and bothe the ladyes founde hym on slepe. 'Loo,' seyde the
 Damesell of the Lake, 'ye oughte to be ashamed for to
 murther suche a knyght,' and therewith she threw such an
 inchauntemente upon hir that she loved hym so sore that
 well-nyghe she was nere oute of hir mynde. 30

'A, Lorde Jesu,' seyde this lady Ettarde, 'how is hit
 befallyn unto me that I love now that I have hatyd moste
 of ony man on lyve?'

'That is the ryghteuouse jugemente of God,' seyde the
 damesell. 35

me and syr Pelleas bothe for ye told me ye had slayne hym and now I knowe wel
 it is not soo he is on lyue And yf syre Pelleas had ben as uncurteis to yow F (MS.
 B.N. fr. 112, 27c): vous me faisiés entendre que vous aviez Pellias occis, mez non
 avez, car ce est il qui ceans a esté 5 C* deceyued me and bytrayd me falsly that
 8 C Nymue 20 C lye in 22 C And ther whyle she 29 so not in C†
 30 nere not in C 32 C now hym that 34 C ryght wys Iugement

And than anone sir Pelleas awaked and loked uppon Ettarde, and wha[n] he saw hir he knew her, and than he hated hir more than ony woman on lyve, and seyde, 'Away, 66^v traytours, and com never in my syght!' And whan she herde hym sey so she wepte and made grete sorow oute of mynde.

(24) 'Sir knyght Pelleas,' seyde the Damesel of the Lake, 'take your horse and com forth withoute of this contrey, and ye shall love a lady that woll love you.'

10 'I woll well,' seyde sir Pelleas, 'for this lady Ettarde hath done me grete dispyte and shame;' and there he tolde hir the begynnyng and endyng, and how he had never purposed to have rysen agayne tyll he had bene dede. 'And now suche grace God hath sente me that I hate hir as much as I have 15 loved hir.'

'Thanke me therefore,' seyde the Lady of the Lake.

Anone sir Pelleas armed hym and toke his horse and commaunded his men to brynge aftir his pavylyons and his stuffe where the Lady of the Lake wolde assyngne them. So 20 this lady Ettarde dyed for sorow, and the Damesel of the Lake rejoysed sir Pelleas, and loved togedyrs duryng their lyfe.

(25) Now turne we unto sir Marhaute that rode with the damesel of thirty wynter of ayge southwarde. And so they 25 come into a depe foreste, and by fortune they were nyghted and rode longe in a depe way, and at the laste they com unto a courtlage and there they asked herborow. But the man of the courtlage wolde nat logge them for no tetryse that they coulde trete, but this much the good man seyde: 'And 30 ye woll take the adventure of youre herbourage, I shall bryng you there ye may be herbourde.'

'What aventure is that I shall have for my herborow?' seyde sir Marhaute.

'Ye shall wete whan ye com there,' seyde the good man.

35 'Sir, what aventure so hit be, I pray the to brynge me thidir, for I am wery, my damesel and my horse both.'

5-6 *C* oute of mesure* 16 therefore *not in C* *C* damoyssel of the lake
 19 them *not in C* 22 *C* lyf dayes 29 *C* thus moche 30 *C* youre
 lodgyng 31 *C* ye shalle be lodged 32 *C* my lodgyng 35-6 *C* be bryng
 me thyder I pray the sayd syr Marhaus for 36 both *not in C*

So the good man wente uppon his gate before hym in a lane, and within an houre he brought hym untyll a fayre castell. And than the pore man called the porter, and anone 67^r he was lette into the castell. And so he tolde the lorde how he had brought hym a knyght arraunte and a damesell 5 wolde be lodged with hym. 'Lette hym in,' seyde the lorde, 'for hit may happen he shall repente that they toke theire herborow here.' So sir Marhaute was let in with a torchelyght, and there was a grete syght of goodly men that welcomed hym; and than his horse was lad into a stable, 10 and he and the damesel were brought into the halle, and there stode a myghty duke and many goodly men aboute hym. Than this duke asked hym what he hyght, and fro whens he com, and with whom he dwelte.

'Sir,' he seyde, 'I am a knyght of kynge Arthurs and 15 knyght of the Table Rounde, and my name is sir Marhaute, and borne I was in Irelande.'

'That me repentes,' seyde the duke, 'for I love nat thy lorde nother none of thy felowys of the Table Rounde. And therefore ease thyself this nyght as well as thou mayste, 20 for as to-morne I and my six sonnes shall macch with you.'

'Is there no remedy,' seyde sir Marhaute, 'but that I must have ado with you and your six sunnes at onys?'

'No,' seyde the duke, 'for this cause. I made myne avowe, 25 for sir Gawayne slew my sevynth sonne in a recountre, therefore I made myne avow that there sholde never knyght of kynge Arthurs courte lodge with me or com thereas I myght have ado with hym but I wolde revenge me of my sonnes deth.' 30

'What is your name?' sayde sir Marhaute, 'I requyre you telle me, and hit please you.'

'Wete thou well I am the duke of Southe Marchis.'

'Al' seyde sir Marhaute, 'I have herde seyde that ye have bene longe tyme a grete foo unto my lorde Arthure 35 and unto his knyghtes.'

1-2 C† wente and opened the gate and within (*see note*)

9 C was a goodely syghte

15 C Kynge Nrthurs

7-8 C their lodgyng

thenne sayd the duke to hym that me sore repenteth the cause is this for 26 C†

seuen sonnes

29-30 C wold haue a reuengyng of my

34 C herd saye

'That shall ye fele to-morne,' seyde the duke, 'and ye leve so longe.'

67^v 'Shall I have ado with you?' seyde sir Marhaute.

'Ye,' seyde the duke, 'thereof shalt thou not chose. And
5 therefore let take hym to his chambir and lette hym have all
that tyll hym longis.' So sir Marhaute departed and was led
unto his chambir, and his damesel was led in tyll hir chambir.

And on the morne the duke sente unto sir Marhaute and
bade hym make hym redy. And so sir Marhaute arose and
10 armed hym. And than there was a masse songe afore hym,
and brake his faste, and so mounted on horsebak in the
courte of the castell there they sholde do batayle. So there
was the deuke all redy on horsebak and clene armed, and
his six sonnys by hym, and everyche had a spere in his
15 honde. And so they encountirde whereas the deuke and his
sonnys brake her sperys uppon hym, but sir Marhaute
hylde up his spere and touched none of hem.

(26) Than come the four sonnes by couple, and two of them
brake their sperys, and so dud the other two. And all this
20 whyle sir Marhaute towched hem nat. Than sir Marhaute
ran to the deuke and smote hym downe with his speare, that
horse and man felle to the erthe, and so he served his sonnes.
Than sir Marhaute alyght downe and bade the deuke yelde
hym, other he wolde sle hym. Than som of his sonnes
25 recovirde and wolde have sette uppon sir Marhaute. Than
sir Marhaute seyde, 'Sir deuke, cese thy sonnys, and ellys I
woll do the uttirmust to you all.' Than the deuke sye he
myght nat ascape the deth, he cryed to his sonnes and
charged them to yelde them to sir Marhaute, and than they
30 kneled alle adowne and putt the pomels of their swerdis to
the knyght, and so he receyvid them; and than they hove up
their fadir on his feete. And so by their comunal assent
promysed to sir Marhaute never to be fooys unto kynge
Arthure, and thereuppon at Whytsonday next aftir to com,
35 he and his sonnes, and there to putt them in the kynges
68^r grace. Then sir Marhaute departed.

1-2 and ye leve so longe *not in C†* 5-6 C therefore take yow to your chambre
and ye shalle have all that to yow longeth 7 C to a chambre C
vnto her chamber 12 W of of 21 downe *not in C* 26 C sayd to
the duke sease thy sonnes or els 31 W and & so 31-2 C they halp vp
their fader and soo by their comynal 34 next *not in C*

And within two dayes sir Marhautes damesel brought hym whereas was a grete turnemente that the lady Vawse had cryed, and who that dud beste sholde have a ryche cerclet of golde worth a thousand besauntis. And there sir Marhaute dud so nobely that he was renomed, and had smeten doune forty knyghtes, and so the cerclet of golde was rewarded hym. Than he departed thens with grete honoure.

And so within sevensyght his damesel brought hym to an erlys place. His name was the erle Fergus that affir was sir Trystrams knyght, and this erle was but a yonge man and late com to his londis, and there was a gyaunte faste by hym that hyght Taulurd, and he had another brother in Cornuayle that hyght Taulas that sir Trystram slewe whan he was oute of his mynde. So this erle made his complaynte unto sir Marhaute that there was a gyaunte by hym that destroyed all his londis and how he durste nowhere ryde nother go for hym.

'Sir,' seyde he, 'whether usyth he to fyght on horsebak othir on foote?'

'Nay,' seyde the erle, 'there may no horse bere hym.'

'Well,' seyde sir Marhaute, 'than woll I fyght with hym on foote.'

So on the morne sir Marhaute prayde the erle that one of his men myght brynge hym where the gyaunte was, and so one brought hym where he syghe hym sytte undir a tre of hooly, and many clubbis of ironne and gysernes aboute hym. So this knyght dressed hym to the gyaunte and put his shyld before hym, and the gyaunte toke an ironne club in his honde, and at the fyrste stroke he clave syr Marhautis shelde. And there he was in grete perell, for the gyaunte was a sly fyghter. But at the laste sir Marhaute smote of his ryght arme aboven the elbow. Than the gyaunte fledde and the knyght affter hym, and so he drove hym into a watir; but the gyaunte was so hyghe that he myght nat wade affir hym. And than sir Marhaute made the erle Fergus man to fecche hym stonys, and with th[o] stonys the knyght gave the gyaunte many sore strokis

1 *C* his damoyssel 2 *C* de Vawse 5-6 *C* had somtyme f̄doune 7 *C* grete worship
18 *C* sayd the knyghte 25 *C* and so he was for he saw hym 26 *C* gysarms
30 *C** shelde in ii pyeces And 31 *C* a wyly fyghter 37 *W* that *C* sore knockes

tylle at the laste he made hym falle downe in the watir, and so was he there dede.

Than sir Marhalte wente into the gyauntes castell, and there he delyverde four-and-twenty knyghtes oute of the
 5 gyauntes preson and twelve ladyes; and there he had grete rychesse oute of numbir, that dayes of his lyff he was nevir poore man. Than he returned to the erle Fergus, the whyche thanked hym gretly and wolde have yevyn hym half his londys, but he wolde none take. So sir Marhaute dwellid
 10 with the erle nye half a yere, for he was sore brused with the gyaunte. So at the laste he toke his leve, and as he rode by the way with his damysel he mette with sir Gawayne and wyth sir Uwayne.

So by adventure he mette with four knyghtes of Arthurs
 15 courte: the fyrst was sir Sagramour le Desyrus, sir Ozanna le Cure Hardy, sir Dodynas le Saveage, and sir Felotte of Lystynoyse; and there sir Marhaute with one spere smote downe these four knyghtes and hurte them sore. And so departed to mete at his day.

(27) 20 Now turne we unto sir Uwayne that rode westwarde with his damesell of three score wyntir of ayge. And there was a turnemente nyghe the marche of Walys, and at that turnemente sir Uwayne smote doune thirty knyghtes. Therefore was gyffyn hym the pryce, and that was a
 25 jarfaucoun and a whyght stede trapped with cloth of golde. So than sir Uwayne ded many strange adventures by the
 69^r meanys of the olde damesel, and so she brought [hym] to a lady that was called the Lady of the Roch, the whyche was curtayse.

So there was in that contrey two knyghtes that were
 30 brethirne, and they were called two perelous knyghtes: that one hyght sir Edward of the Rede Castell, and that other sir Hew of the Rede Castell, and these two brethirne had disheryted the Lady of the Roche of a barounery of londis by their extorsion. And as this knyghte was lodged with
 35 this lady, she made hir complaynte to hym of thes two knyghtes.

4-5 *C* xxiiii ladyes and twelue knyghtes oute of the gyants pryson
 hardy *not in C* *C* syre felot 19 *C* day afore sette
 broughte hym there as was a turnement 25 *C* gerfaucoun
 29 *C* there were in the countrey 32 *C* syr Hue

16 le cure
 21-2 *C* and she
 27 *W* olde olde

'Madam,' seyde sir Uwayne, 'they ar to blame, for they do ayenste the hyghe Order of Knyghthode and the oth that they made. And if hit lyke you I woll speke with hem, because I am a knyght of kyng Arthurs, and to entrete them with fayrenesse; and if they woll nat, I shall do batayle 5 with them for Goddis sake and in the defence of your ryght.'

'Gramercy,' seyde the lady, 'and thereas I may nat acquyte you, God shall.'

So on the morne the two knyghtes were sente fore, that they sholde speke with the Lady of the Roche, and wete 10 you well they fayled nat, for they com with an hondred horses. But whan this lady sawe them in suche maner so bygge she wolde nat suffir sir Uwayne to go oute to them uppon no sureté ne of fayre langage, but she made hym to speke with them over a toure. But fynally thes two brethirne 15 wolde nat be entreted, and answerde that they wolde kepe that they had.

'Well,' seyde syr Uwayne, 'than woll I fyght with one of you and preve that ye do this lady wronge.'

'That woll we nat,' seyde they, 'for and we do batayle 20 we two woll fyght bothe at onys with one knyght. And therefore, yf ye lyst to fyght so, we woll be redy at what oure ye woll assygne, and yf ye wynne us in batayle, she 69^v to have hir londis agayne.'

'Ye say well,' seyde sir Uwayne, 'therefore make you 25 redy, and that ye be here to-morne in the defence of this ladyes ryght.'

So was there sykernesse made on bothe partyes, that no (28) treson sholde be wrought. And so thes knyghtes departed and made them redy. 30

And that nyght sir Uwayne had grete chere, and on the morne he arose erly and harde masse and brake his faste, and so rode into the playne withoute the gatis where hoved the two brethirne abydyng hym. So they ran togedyrs passyng sore, that sir Edward and sir Hew brake their 35 sperys uppon sir Uwayne, and sir Uwayne smote sir

6 for Goddis sake *not in C* 10 *C* shold come thyder to speke 12 *C* this
maner 14 *C* ne for no fayr 21 *C* fyght with one knygt at ones 22 *C*
yf ye wille fyghte 23-4 *C* bataille the lady shal have 29 *C* wrought on
neyther partye soo thenne the knyghtes 34 *C* they rode†

Edwarde, that he felle over his horse and yette his spere
braste nat. And than he spurred his horse and com uppon
sir Hew and overthrew hym. But they sone recoverde and
dressed their shyldes and drew oute their swerdes, and bade
5 sir Uwayne alyght and do his batayle to the utteraunce.

Than sir Uwayne devoyded his horse delyverly and put
his shyld before hym and drew his swerde, and so they
threste togedyrs and eythir gave other grate strokis. And
there thes two brethirne wounded sir Uwayne passyng
10 grevously, that the Lady of the Roche wente he sholde have
deyed. And thus they fought togedyrs fyve oures as men
outraged of reson, and at the laste sir Uwayne smote sir
Edwarde uppon the helme suche a stroke that his swerde
kerved unto his canellbone; and than sir Hew abated his
15 corrage, but sir Uwayne presed faste to have slayne hym.
That saw sir Hew and kneled adowne and yelded hym to
sir Uwayne, and he of his jantylnesse resceyved his swerde
and toke hym by the honde, and wente into the castell
togydys.

20 Than this Lady of the Roche was passyng glad, and sir
Hew made grete sorow for his brothirs deth. But this lady
70^r was restored ayen of all hir londis, and sir Hew was com-
maunded to be at the courte of kynge Arthure at the next
feste of Pentecoste. So sir Uwayne dwelled with this lady
25 nyghe halfe a yere, for hit was longe or he myght be hole
of his grete hurtis. And so, whan hit drew nyghe the terme-
day that sir Gawayne, sir Marhaute and sir Uwayne made
to mete at the crosseway, than every knyght drew hym
thydir to holde his promyse that they made. And sir
30 Marhalte and sir Uwayne brought their damesels with hem,
but sir Gawayne had loste his damesel.

(29) Ryght so at the twelve monthis ende they mette all three
knyghtes at the fountayne and theire damesels, but the
damesell that sir Gawayne had coude sey but lytyll worshyp
35 of hym. So they departed frome the damesels and rode
thorowe a grete foreste, and there they mette with a mes-

5 C to the vttermest	6 C hors sodenly	7-8 C they dressyd	8 C suche
strokes†	11-12 C men raged oute of	W men outraged of	16 C Hue
he kneled	20-1 C and the other broder made	21 C dethe thenne the lady	
27-8 C Vwayne shold mete	29 C had made	31 C damoyssel as it is afore	
reherced			

syngere that com from kynge Arthurs courte that had sought hem well-nyghe a twelve-monthe thorowoute all Ingelonde, Walis, and Scotlonde, and charged yf ever he myght fynde sir Gawayne and sir Uwayne to haste hem unto the courte agayne. And than were they all glad, and so they prayde sir Marhaute to ryde with hem to the kynges courte.

And so within twelve dayes they come to Camelot, and the kynge was passyng glad of their commyng, and so was all the courte. Than the kynge made hem to swere uppon a booke to telle hym all their adventures that had befalle them that twelve-monthe before, and so they ded. And there was sir Marhaute well knowyn, for there were knyghtes that he had macched aforetyme, and he was named one of the beste knyghtes lvyng.

So agayne the feste of Pentecoste cam the Damesell of the Laake and brought with hir sir Pelleas, and at the hyghe feste there was grete joustys. Of all knyghtes that were at that justis sir Pelleas had the pryce and syr Marhaute was named next. But sir Pelleas was so stronge that there myght but few knyghtes stonde hym a buffette with a spere. And at the next feste sir Pelleas and sir Marhalt were made knyghtes of the Rounde Table; for there were two segis voyde, for two knyghtes were slayne that twelve-monthe.

And grete joy had kynge Arthure of sir Pelleas and of sir Marhalte, but Pelleas loved never after sir Gawayne but as he spared hym for the love of the kynge; but oftyn tymes at justis and at turnementes sir Pelleas quytte sir Gawayne, for so hit rehersyth in the booke of Frensh.

So sir Trystrams many dayes aftir fought with sir Marhaute in an ilande. And there they dud a grete batayle, but the laste sir Trystrams slew hym. So sir Trystrams was so wounded that unnethe he myght recover, and lay at a nunrye half a yere.

And sir Pelleas was a worshypfull knyght, and was one of the four that encheved the Sankgreal. And the Damesel of

1-2 C kynge Arthur that had sought (had *not in S*)

12 before *not in C*

13 W Marhaute was well

knyghtes and of al knyghtes that

21 C sytte hym

28 C of kyng arthur

33 C at the last*

4 C to brynge hem

18 C grete Iustynge of

23 C table rouid

the Laake made by her meanes that never he had ado with
 sir Launcelot de Laake, for where sir Launcelot was at
 ony justis or at ony turnemente she wolde not suffir hym
 to be there that day but yf hit were on the syde of sir
 5 Launcelot.

HERE ENDYTH THIS TALE, AS THE FREYNSHE BOOKE SEYTH,
 FRO THE MARYAGE OF KYNGE UTHUR UNTO KYNG ARTHURE
 THAT REGNED AFTIR HYM AND DED MANY BATAYLES.

AND THIS BOOKE ENDYTH WHEREAS SIR LAUNCELOT AND
 10 SIR TRYSTRAMS COM TO COURTE. WHO THAT WOLL MAKE ONY
 MORE LETTE HYM SEKE OTHER BOOKIS OF KYNGE ARTHURE OR
 OF SIR LAUNCELOT OR SIR TRYSTRAMS; FOR THIS WAS DRAWYN
 BY A KNYGHT PRESONER, SIR THOMAS MALLEORRÉ, THAT GOD
 SENDE HYM GOOD RECOVER. AMEN.

15

EXPLICIT.

5-15 *C* launcelot Explicit liber quartus *The colophon (from Here endyth to*
Amen) is not in C† 14 *W* Amen &c.

THE TALE
OF THE
NOBLE KING ARTHUR
THAT WAS EMPEROR HIMSELF
THROUGH DIGNITY OF
HIS HANDS

[*Winchester MS., ff. 71^r-96^r;
Caxton, Book V*]

CAXTON'S RUBRICS

1. How twelve aged Ambassaytours of Rome came to kyng Arthur to demaunde truage for Brytayne.
2. How the kynges and lordes promysed to kyng Arthur ayde and helpe ageynst the Romainys.
3. How kyng Arthur helde a parlement at Yorke and how he ordeyned how the royaume shold be governed in his absence.
4. How kyng Arthur beyng shyped and lyeng in his caban had a mervayllous dreme, and of th'exposycion therof.
5. How a man of the contreye tolde to hym of a mervayllous geaunte, and how he faught and conquerd hym.
6. How kyng Arthur sente syr Gawayn and other to Lucius and how they were assayled and escaped wyth worshyp.
7. How Lucius sente certeyn espyes in a bussument for to have taken hys knyghtes beyng prysonners, and how they were letted.
8. How a senatour tolde to Lucius of their dyscomfytur, and also of the grete batayl betwene Arthur and Lucius.
9. How Arthur after he had achyevyd the batayl ayenst the Romainys entred into Almayn and so into Ytalye.
10. Of a bataylle doon by Gauwayn ayenst a Sarasyn whiche after was yelden and became Crysten.
11. How the Sarasyns came oute of a wode for to rescowe theyr beestys, and of a grete bataylle.
12. How syr Gauwayn retorned to kyng Arthur wyth his prysoners. And how the kyng wanne a cyté, and how he was crowned Emperour.

The text in small type is a reprint of Caxton's Book V, and Caxton's chapter-numbers are given in round brackets in the margin. Asterisks denote variants which are confirmed by earlier texts.

In the critical text, based here as elsewhere on the Winchester MS., the following symbols are used: \ ' for alliterating lines; 「 」 for readings supplied by Caxton and attested by at least one of the earlier texts; [] for emendations based on Caxton; and < > for all other emendations. Rejected readings are given in footnotes.

The line-numbers in square brackets refer to the unique surviving copy of the alliterative Morte Arthure (MA).